



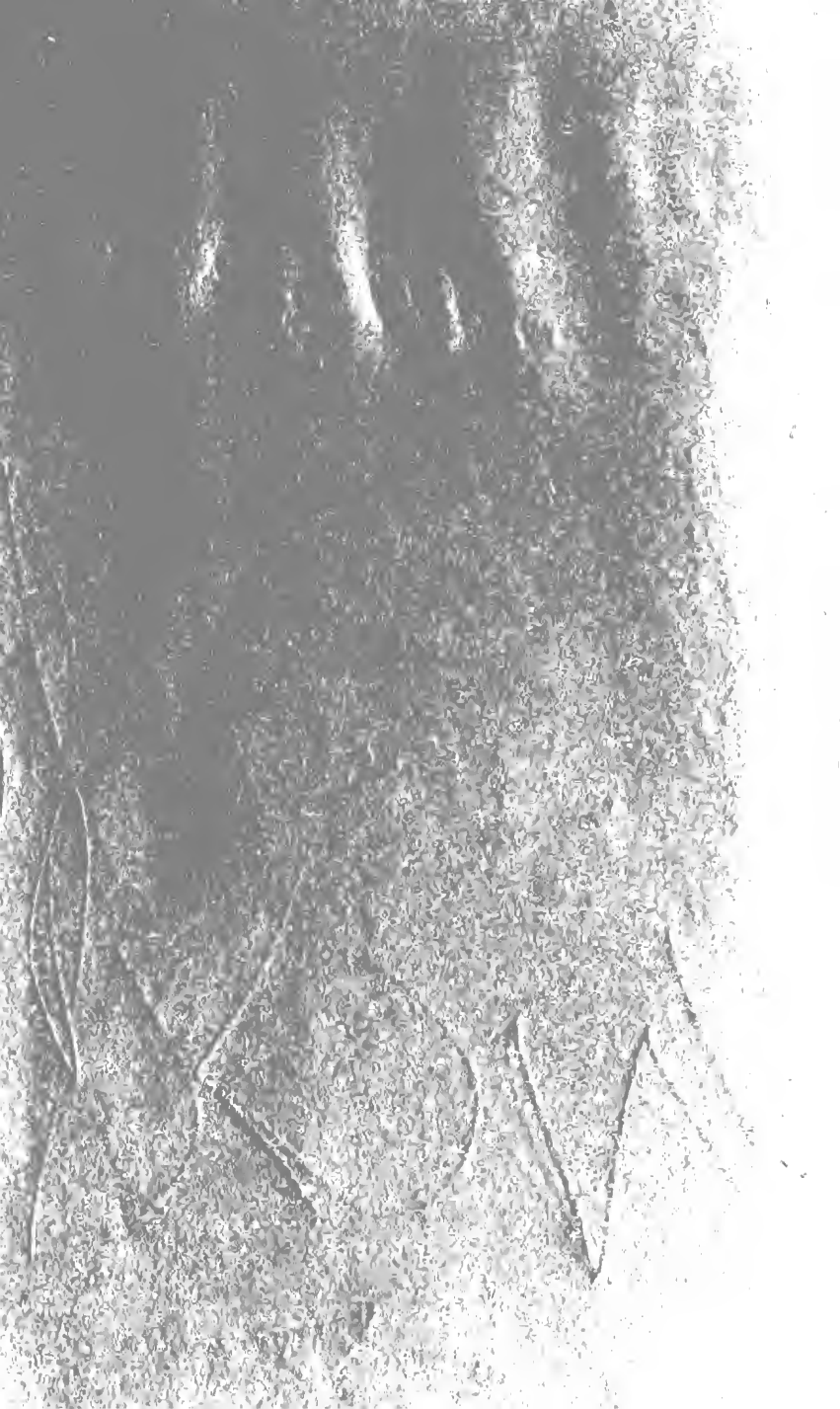


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LEFTY



Lefty hurled himself against Matt in an ecstasy of joy.

# LEFTY

*A Story of a Boy  
and a Dog*

By

LOUISE RICHARDSON RORKE

With a Foreword by

MARSHALL SAUNDERS

Illustrated by

W. R. STARK

TORONTO

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD .....	vii
MISSING .....	3
THE RESCUE .....	11
MAKING A RESOLUTION .....	21
THE STORM .....	30
A FRIEND .....	40
THE FARM .....	49
A DISCOVERY .....	60
EARNING A DINNER .....	71
THE ALARM .....	82
MARAUDERS .....	90
IN SEARCH OF AID .....	97
PRISONER .....	105
ESCAPE .....	112
THE OPEN WINDOW .....	122
WINWOOD ROAD .....	132
THE CACHE .....	140
CLUES .....	149
SETTLING IN .....	162



## FOREWORD

"Lefty" is a fascinating story about a boy and his dog—one of the best animal stories that I have ever read. The author has cleverly submerged herself; it is all boy and dog.

The boy, as boys do, unconsciously accepting Michelet's doctrine of the pacification and union of all living nature, recognizes the fact that dogs have rights, provided they do not interfere with the rights of other created beings, that they should "live and move and have their being".

The story contains adventures so thrilling that the reader is compelled to revert to the childhood trick of turning to the last pages to see how it all ends. Better still it is a tribute, not only to friendship between boy and dog, but to that very sincere friendship which may exist between a "real boy" and a fine understanding man.

The average boy or girl gets something out of affectionate association with animals that older people can not entirely comprehend. They seem

to understand each other in some mysterious way, and this relationship between them reacts on the character of both. The boy who owns a dog has learned to recognize responsibility for another; to put another's needs and interests before his own.

John Bright says: "Humanity to animals is a great point. If I were a teacher in a school, I would make it a very important part of my business to impress every boy and girl with the duty of his or her being kind to all animals. It is impossible to say how much suffering there is in the world from the barbarity or unkindness which people show to what we call the inferior creatures."

We grown folk, too, and even the worst of us, are not insensible to this influence.

St. Francis of Assissi spoke of his brother beasts and sister birds, and he even exhorted the little fishes to praise their Maker—and who was kinder to unclean beggars than this good saint? Love for everything created casts out hatred.

Teachers and parents will render a service to society by putting "Lefty" in the hands of boys and girls.

When it comes to a dog, the man is only a

grown-up boy, so this story is written in a way which older folk, too, may enjoy.

It was an old man, Alexander Muir, who wrote one of the finest tributes to the loyalty and love of animal friends:

“Oh! sure am I when I come to die,  
And through Death’s portals go,  
That the cats and dogs and the little white mice,  
And those birds I used to know,  
Will all come rushing to welcome me,  
Their friend of long ago!”

MARSHALL SAUNDERS.





LEFTY



## CHAPTER I

### MISSING

It was twelve-fifteen and June sunshine fell dazzlingly on the pavement and sent back winking reflections from glass wind-shields and nickel plating as the double line of automobiles which formed the usual noon procession on Queen Street East, swept up the Winwood Road crossing and whizzed past. Matt Carewe waited impatiently for a chance to pass between them. When it came he dashed across the street with a gay whoop, continued his progress homeward at a run and hurried down the narrow alley between the two brick houses into a neat backyard filled with sunshine—nothing else save an empty packing box and a dangling collar.

At this sight the flying feet stopped and the rich colour drained suddenly away from the boy's cheeks, leaving the freckles superimposed spots of gold.

"Lefty!" he cried in a panic. "Lefty!"

He fairly scrambled up the half dozen steps which led to the back door and threw himself against the locked screen.

"Aunt Jo!" he shouted, "Where's Lefty? Aunt Jo! Aunt Jo! AUNT JO! Where's Lefty?"

A brisk-looking woman with a stout, hard figure and a face which matched, came from an inner room.

"Hush up, Matt," she said, "quit your noise! What are you yelling about?"

"Lefty," Matt cried, "Where's Lefty? What did you do to him?"

The woman cast an appraising glance at the boy.

"Well, where is he?" she said. "I saw awhile ago that he'd slipped his collar and gone. I thought you'd meet him—maybe."

"Slipped his collar! Aunt Jo, that's a lie! You know it is! He couldn't slip his collar. You told me that before, when he got away. I fixed it just before I left this morning so it nearly choked him. You let him loose, Aunt Jo! You

know you did! I hate you! If they've got him this time I'll never forgive you! And they've been around—the dog catchers—Tom Connor said he saw 'em—If they've got Lefty——."

He dashed away, his sentence unfinished, and the woman laughed as she went back to the dinner-table.

"What's the row?" Mr. Brown asked curiously.

"It's just young Matt. Lefty's got loose again." She winked slyly and added: "This time I guess he won't be brought back. The dog catchers weren't very far away."

"Kind of a shame, though," the man said lazily. "Have some more sausage, Jo? Did the kid guess?"

"Guess what?"

"That you let him loose?"

"I didn't let him loose, stupid! I just *loosened his collar.*"

The man laughed.

"Why, he eats more than the boy," the woman added defensively. "Tom Carewe's only paying

Matt's keep, certainly not for the two of them. And he deaves my head off yap-yap-yappin' because he's tied."

"He does! I never hear him!"

"Because you're only here when young Matt's around. That's another thing. I never get anything out of Matt any more. Since the dog's tied he won't leave him a minute."

"It's a fool regulation anyway," the man said, "that dogs can't run except on a leash. My stars, when I was a kid I had *two* dogs!"

"Now don't be foolish, Bob; the dog's gone and we're well rid of him. We—"

Her sentence was cut short by Matt's excited entrance. His eyes were burning in his pinched white face. His clenched hands trembled. He walked straight up to the man at the table.

"Please, Uncle Bob, will you give me two dollars and a car ticket," he cried. "If you will, you needn't pay me for the lawn all summer long, nor for carrying ashes next winter. I'll—I'll do anything you want, only please, *please* give me the money for Lefty! They've got him. Mrs. Con-

nors says she saw them take him—an' he—he was comin' to meet me." Matt gulped and stopped. The big tears were rolling down his cheeks.

The man made a pretense of searching all his pockets.

"I declare, Matt," he said, "I seem to be dead broke. I guess you'll have to wait until pay day."

"Pay day! Oh, Uncle Bob, that's too late! They'll kill him day after to-morrow. Mrs. Connors says they 'aren't any too particular.' That's what she said. They might kill him to-night! He might get into a fight! He might be lonesome and scared! They might forget to feed him. Or they might just kill him because he's big. Oh, please, please give me the money!"

"You'll have to wait till pay day, Matt."

"Hush up, now, Mattie. A big boy like you—twelve years old—to go blubbering like a baby! Sit down and eat your dinner. Bob, give him a sausage." This was from Aunt Jo.

"Aunt Jo, will *you* give me the money?"

"No."

Matt regarded his plate desperately.

"Eat your sausage," Mrs. Brown insisted. "I've heard say that's what they make out of stray dogs, but I guess Lefty hasn't got into that one."

Matt shoved back his chair. "I hate you!" he cried. "If anything happens Lefty I'll—I'll kill you."

He turned and ran sobbing from the room and the woman and man laughed together, half-ashamed.

Nearly two hours later Clayton McHarg, as he was getting out of his car near the corner of Prince and Douglas Streets, was almost knocked down by a small boy who, running with head down and eyes blind from crying, catapulted into him, and, thrown back by the force of the impact, carombed off, took a few staggering steps, and fell. McHarg with two long strides picked him up and set him on his feet. The two looked at each other.

Matt saw a man of thirty-five or forty, lean, tall, brown-faced, brown-handed, with blue-gray eyes that laughed into his, and, as he became aware



of the boy's plight, grew suddenly alert and grave and kind.

"Good heavens, youngster, what's all the hurry? You—why, what's the matter, son?"

Matt was too far gone to tell what was the matter. At the unexpected kindness he broke into a storm of sobbing so that he could not speak. He would have pulled himself away and staggered on, but McHarg detained him.

"What's the matter, youngster? 'Can I help you?' he asked, and then, seeing how incapable the boy was of telling his story, he drew him back into the car. "Sit down here, beside me," he said. "Now get a brace on, and tell me."

He listened while the boy sobbed out his tale.

"Look here," he said when it was finished, "where is this pound? We'll go at once and get your Lefty dog. Sit beside me and quit crying or he'll not know you. And when we get him do you know what we're going to say—yes, *sing*—to that old pound-keeper. We'll sing "Did you ever get Left-y?" Here, you're the owner of the pup—you'd better handle the cash. Do you want

me to go in with you or will you manage the business alone?"

"If you please, I wish you'd come. They mightn't listen to me," Matt said shyly.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RESCUE

Less than two minutes' driving brought them to the pound, and Matt, with McHarg following close behind him, found himself in a dingy little office opening on the street. A man sitting behind a counter rose to meet them.

"Here's a chap who wants to take his dog out of pound," said McHarg.

Matt was straining his ears to hear Lefty's voice in the dull sound of continued barking which reached their ears.

"He'd better make sure of his dog first," said the man. "You can go out to the compound and find him. Here, youngster, not that door! This one—"

"I know! I hear him!" said Matt. "Oh, please hurry!"

He broke into a little trot. At the end of the lane into which they had emerged from the office,

there was a small shanty-like building. Hurrying in through its open door Matt saw two men who seemed to his excited gaze to be engaged in eating pickled onions from a bottle. They ceased as McHarg followed the boy, and one of them with a wide smile agreed to escort them to the dogs. He opened a door, and the barking increased in volume. Matt saw a great yard covered with cinders, and on the opposite side of it a long low shed. The barking came from beyond the shed wall, and Matt was at its door long before the men reached it.

"Weren't tired of 'im, after all, were you?" the attendant said laughing.

He opened the big door, and Matt, with a shout of "Lefty! Lefty! Here, Lefty!" dashed across the shed to a wire grating behind which was a moving mass of canine anxiety, giving combined tongue to hopes and fears and miseries which made the shed seem like the entrance to pandemonium.

Niagara itself could not have drowned out Lefty's shrill barks of recognition and delight.

He came close to the grating and Matt knelt down and pressed his face against it, murmuring words of encouragement and love.

"Now," said the man, "you've got to go back and get a certificate."

But Matt was immovable. Nothing could again separate him from his dog.

It was, finally, McHarg who discovered the necessary information from the excited boy, and exchanged it and the required two dollars for the certificate which gave Lefty his freedom.

But here another obstacle arose.

"Haven't you a leash?" inquired the attendant, his hand on the door.

Matt had produced Lefty's own collar and license tag. He lifted troubled eyes to McHarg's face.

"Do I have to have a leash?" he said. "He'll follow me right at heel. He'll never stir if I tell him 'to heel'."

"You'll see," he added to the man; and then, at sight of their obdurate faces, "anything would

do. Couldn't you lend me a bit of cord? A *thread* would do."

"No, sir!" said the man "he can't go out without a leash. You're a funny boy," he added, "to remember his collar and tag and forget his leash."

"He was tied with a rope," Matt said. "It wasn't mine to bring. Aunt Jo always said it was part of her clothes-line, but it wasn't. The collar and tag were my own. I earned the money for them myself. I can *make* a leash," he added hopefully. He turned out his pockets and found a few knotted pieces of string, which he began diligently opening, Lefty, meanwhile, was deafening their ears with his importunate barks.

"I'll see what's in my car," McHarg said. "You stay here, son."

"Can't he come out?" Matt pleaded.

"No, sir! Not till your friend gets back with your leash," the attendant answered; and Lefty perforce had to wait.

All the other dogs crowded about as if they thought they, too, might find a chance of escape, and barked and whined until Matt thought that



He came close to the grating and Matt knelt down.

they would never be able to make a sound again.

It seemed a long time until McHarg came back, with a "bran new" leash.

"Here you are, son," he said.

But Matt with eager eyes on the man by the door said only "Now!" in a choked voice.

And then Lefty was free, and Matt had to grasp at the grating to keep from being knocked down in the exuberance of the collie's love.

"I guess your face'll be clean!" the man said laughing, as the collie landed ecstatic licks all over Matt's face and hands and jacket.

It was hours after, and when, as he believed he had lost McHarg forever, that Matt remembered that he had not thanked him for the leash.

Outside on the street again, he tried to thank him for Lefty. "You've been awfully good to me, sir," he said. "And to Lefty. If you'll give me your address I'll send you the two dollars just as soon as I can earn it."

McHarg and Lefty made friends at once. The man stood now playing with the exuberant collie and looking thoughtfully at the lad before him.



He was thinking of the boy's story, and wondering if he were going to be allowed to keep his dog after all.

"No," he said. "I don't want you to pay me. That's a present for Lefty here. But I'm going to give you my name and address and I want you not to lose it, youngster."

He took a card from his pocket and wrote on it—

CLAYTON MCHARG,

R.R. No. 4,

Markton, Ontario.

and himself put it safely into Matt's pocket. "I know you don't want to sell your dog, my boy," he said, "but if the time ever comes when you want to find another home for him, I want you to give me first chance. I'll buy him from you."

Matt lifted shocked eyes to McHarg's face. After all, this new friend was no better than other grown-ups. None of them understood.

"I'd never sell Lefty!" he cried.

"No, of course not," McHarg hastened to say. But Matt was still distrustful.

"Well," he said, "I guess Lefty and I must go. Good-bye, sir."

McHarg reached out a detaining hand.

"Hold on a minute. I fancy your dog is hungry and thirsty. Give him a big drink at the nearest fountain, and then get him a good feed in some little butcher's shop. You'd best eat something yourself, too. This will pay for you both."

"Oh, no thank you, sir. I'm not hungry."

"But I want you to feed Lefty anyway. I'm sure he's hungry."

"Well, thank you. I'll pay you back, though, as soon as I can."

"There's another thing I want to tell you,— You said you lived with an uncle?"

"He isn't a real uncle. I just say 'Uncle Bob' and 'Aunt Jo' 'cause in a way they take care of me. I board there. My dad—he's on the stage, and he has to travel with the show—sometimes he blows in an' we have good times together—but mostly he's away. It's two years now since he's been in Toronto, but he sends the money for my board and when I'm through goin' to school

he's promised to get me a job with the company."

"Well," pursued McHarg; "you tell your uncle that he'll get a summons to the police court for letting your dog run. You see, you're a minor, so he's legally responsible for you."

"What will they—they won't put him in jail?" Matt asked fearfully.

"Oh, no!" said McHarg. "He won't even have to pay a fine if it's the first time. That's what I want you to tell him so he won't be angry about it."

Matt considered the matter dubiously. In his own mind he was pretty sure that Mr. Brown *would* be angry about it and that he and Lefty would both have to suffer the consequences.

He was so troubled over this new aspect of the case that he scarcely heard Mr. McHarg telling him that he had to be at a meeting and must leave him. Otherwise, he said, he would have been glad to take both Matt and Lefty home in his car.

"Oh, no, sir!" Matt had managed to articulate. Home was the last place he wanted to go. He watched the shining big car drive away and

then looked down at the crumpled paper which McHarg had put into his hand.

It was a two dollar bill.

Matt's spirits rose. At any rate here was Lefty jumping about him in the old glad way. They were free—both of them—and the possessors of two dollars.

"Come on, Lefty," said Matt, "let's go and get a drink."

## CHAPTER III

### MAKING A RESOLUTION

Mid-afternoon found Matt and Lefty loitering along the waterfront in Exhibition Park. Neither was anxious to go home, being more than content with the society of the other. From time to time Lefty hurled himself against Matt in an ecstasy of joy over their renewed companionship and here, on the bright lonely beach where there was no one to see, Matt responded to these rough caresses by throwing both arms around the excited dog and holding him tightly until he wriggled away. When they were tired Matt threw himself down on the sand and Lefty, panting prodigiously, snuggled close. The boy buried his hand in Lefty's great ruff and lay looking up at the floating clouds.

They had had a long drink at the fountain and Matt had bought meat and buns on which they had made a substantial dinner as they walked. Now the dog's mind was filled with contentment.

He had found his master who could think and plan for both of them. He was no longer "on his own".

This was exactly the thing that Matt was doing as he looked at the wide, deep space of sky with its sweeping clouds. The more he considered McHarg's last words with their suggestion of a summons to court, the more he was appalled by them. If Uncle Bob received a summons to court Matt was quite convinced that that would be the end of Lefty.

"He'd be so angry he'd never let me keep him," Matt thought anxiously. To do him justice, though he knew that he would himself probably be severely punished for taking the dog out of pound, he never gave that side of the matter a thought. But he grew more and more concerned for Lefty, as he turned over in his mind what a slim chance there might be of hiding him from the wrath which he felt was sure to descend upon him.

He went over in his mind every one of the boys he knew. Some of them had dogs. All the others would have had if their elders had been willing.

He was, alas for him now, singularly devoid of grown-up friends to whom he might turn. So far as he knew he had no relatives, other than his actor father, who was so seldom in Toronto that Matt scarcely felt that he knew him. Since his mother had died when he was a little chap two years old, Matt had lived with the Browns whom he called 'Uncle Bob' and 'Aunt Jo', though, as Aunt Jo often told him, he was "no earthly relation" to them. It was nearly two years since his father had been home. Aunt Jo said very likely he was married again and that Matt "needn't expect to see much of him", but he sent money regularly for Matt's board and clothes and occasionally wrote to him, enclosing pocket money. Matt hadn't much idea where he would be now—the company he was with, staged, usually, one-night shows in the smaller Western towns. So there was no help in that direction either. Long before a letter or even a telegram could come the storm he dreaded would have broken.

Even after Lefty got tired of being so still, and out of sheer exuberance of spirit began making little dashes and barks at the incoming waves,

Matt still pondered anxiously over his difficulties. In such a strait his mind wandered back to McHarg's offer to buy the dog. For one brief instant he allowed his mind to visage parting with Lefty—and was straightway so forlorn, so utterly lonely, that he put the thought from him as he would a vision of death. He even, in a sudden panic of apprehension, called the big yellow fellow back to his side, and made him lie down there, in spite of his pleading eyes and restless eager wriggings to be gone.

Though his offer was rejected, the thought of McHarg stayed in the boy's mind. He pulled out the card which had been given him and studied the pencilled name.

CLAYTON MCHARG,

R.R. No. 4,

Markton.

McHarg had liked Lefty. Matt had a warm, "glow-y" feeling that he had liked him, Matt, too. He had been awfully decent to both of them. Perhaps—oh, wonderful thought!—perhaps he would take them both. There must be hundreds



of things that a boy could do on a farm—things like driving cows, and feeding calves, and running errands and digging potatoes, and picking berries—surely if Mr. McHarg was willing to buy Lefty, Matt would be able to earn his own board. He and Lefty, he thought gleefully, could sleep in the barn. What larks!

Suppose he didn't want them—he had been kind once, he might help them again—and, oh, well, maybe this wasn't a way out at all, but it was the only *glimmering* of a way out. He might try it, since there was nothing else. It was better, surely much better, to leave Lefty with Mr. McHarg than to have him sent back to pound to be poisoned, or shot by Uncle Bob himself to "make the job sure". Matt, out of his perplexity, sent up a prayer to the blue of the deepening sky.

"Dear God," he said, "You know all about what a peach of a dog Lefty is, and that I've had him ever since he was a puppy an' the folks that owned his mother just moved away and left him—You know I've taken care of him since—and taught him, and kept him clean, and good-

natured, and kind—Now I can't do any more. Will You please take care of him. But if You do not have to take him away from me to take care of him, then please leave him to me. If You'll just show me, I'll do my best. Please help me. Amen."

It was a very boyish and unconventional prayer, but Matt felt better for it. He had stood up to make it, feeling that it was more reverent. Now, in a business-like way, he called Lefty back from racing with the waves.

"You and I are going to Markton, Lefty," he said. "We've got to plan."

Markton lay some forty miles north of the city on one of the main provincial highways and Matt knew that it could be reached both by rail and trolley. The dollar and sixty cents still in his possession might take them at least part way, but Matt was too much afraid of being followed and brought back to risk the trolley. "We've got to walk, Lefty," he announced, "'n the sooner we start the better, seein' how little we have in the way of money."

After much pondering he decided to send a note

to Aunt Jo. After all, she and Uncle Bob had given him a home, and been good to him in their own way; they had even tolerated Lefty until just lately when he grew so big and had to be tied up, and ate so much. Besides, if he could be sure enough of getting work for the summer they might be glad to let him go. So he found a post-office at the corner of Prince and Lorrimer Streets, and invested in two postcards. One of these he sent to his father at the forwarding address which they had always used. The other was to Mrs. Brown.

"Dear Aunt Jo," he wrote, "I am going to work for a farmer who lives out in the country. I just met him this afternoon. I will write you from there. School is over in three days and I have written on my 'exams'. You know you said I was big enough to get some work. Well, this will be fine. I'll write to you from there. It's a big farm and a good place. I have written about it to father."

"They'll get that to-morrow morning," Matt thought. "They won't do much worrying before then."

He had often stayed all night with Artie Renan. Usually when he did this he telephoned Aunt Jo, but, remembering in what a temper he had left the house, he thought she would not be concerned that he did not do so. Renan's had no telephone so she could not know he wasn't there.

"We'll walk all night," said Matt, "and sleep in the day time." He did not know how much easier it was to plan this than to carry it out, having never attempted to "walk all night". Nor, apparently did Lefty, for they started out both in the gayest humour.

Matt had decided to risk a street-car to the city limits, but when, toward Eglinton Avenue, the people began to thin out he grew suddenly afraid of being noticed. He stowed Lefty carefully under the seat, and in a whisper threatened him with the direst penalties if he so much as poked out his nose. A few blocks farther, however, he saw an old lady looking toward the dog with suspicion and, jumping to his feet, he rang the bell and they left the car.

"If you weren't so big and so peachy, old Yellow Fellow," he said, "we'd get on better. Folks

would never notice me, now, if you weren't along. Never mind, though. We can walk."

It was, somehow, harder work than Matt had anticipated. They sat down before six o'clock to share the buns and cheese which Matt had bought before they started. The boy was glad to rest. "We'd better get off Yonge Street, Lefty," he said, as he noted the interested glances cast their way by passing motorists. "Night's our time, I guess." Leading off from the highway a few rods farther on was a new road which, Matt could see, led down into a ravine. On one side of it, some six hundred yards from the main road, it was bordered by a steep wooded slope. It looked tempting and the boy and dog made their tired way to its shelter.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE STORM

In the long slant of the evening sunshine the woods looked bright and warm. It was scarcely more than a grove, second growth maple and birch with an occasional spruce or clump of cedars. There were stumps where larger trees, probably pine, had been cut and clumps of dog-wood, osiers and hazel.

Matt and Lefty walked straight through it to the open lots beyond. There was an acre or so of these, then small brick cottages, the nearest in course of construction. The lots adjoining the highway had been cleared also, but were not yet built upon. At the side farthest from the main highway the little patch of woods was broken by a steep bank which dropped almost perpendicularly to a ravine. Through this the new road which Matt had followed, twisting sharply ran southward almost parallel with the highway. Beyond it were sloping gardens belonging, evidently,

to a big house, of which Matt could see only the chimneys. The little wood was itself scarcely an acre in extent.

Satisfied with this shelter Matt came back to the hill slope facing the road. Near its summit, he had observed as he climbed, was a little hollow, made, perhaps, by a rotted root, into which dried leaves had drifted year after year until it seemed almost full. It was dappled with June sunshine and looked invitingly soft and warm. Matt and Lefty snuggled into it, the loop of the new leash around Matt's wrist.

"We'll rest here, Lefty," Matt said, "until it is nearly dark. Then we'll walk again. You won't be so conspicuous, you old, yellow chump, you."

The boy had not meant to sleep, but the long walk, his anger at Aunt Jo, his worry over Lefty and the joy of finding him again had all conspired to make him more weary than he realized, and he was soon oblivious of his surroundings.

He wakened to black darkness and the growl of thunder. Where they lay they were in a measure

sheltered from the force of the wind, but Matt could hear it tearing through the tree-tops. Even before he could make himself remember where he was he felt the splash on his face of the first great drops of the storm. Flashes of lightning illumined the little woods like day, alternating with absolute darkness. Matt rose to his knees, still bewildered by the sudden waking, and Lefty pressed close against him. Lefty hated thunderstorms. As a rule Matt did not mind them, but this was more strange, more frightening, here in the woods. Matt thought with envy of the little white bed and the attic room at Aunt Jo's. He would have given anything to be there—anything except Lefty.

Somehow the woods seemed different in the darkness. Anything might be behind the moving trees. He started to run down the bank toward the road. But he had not rightly gauged its steepness, and a mis-step sent him rolling down the hill. Barely thirty yards below their resting place a young spruce had grown on the side of the hill and close below it on the slope was a huge fallen log, half-rotted now and covered with soft green



moss. Dragging the unwilling Lefty, Matt half fell, half rolled, down the leaf-covered slope and brought up against this log, barking his shins against the trunk of the spruce. Lefty hung back at the length of his leash.

For a moment the boy lay stunned—not quite sure whether the roar of the on-coming rain was something outside himself or merely a roaring in his ears. This was because the place in which he lay was sheltered completely from the falling drops. The heavy foliage of the spruce shut out from the little sloping area between its trunk and the log below it all the beating rain which swept over the top of the hill. Discovering this Matt coaxed Lefty in after him, holding up the branches so that he might crawl under them. Close to the log there was room for Matt to sit upright. Lefty, crouched beside him, uttered an occasional low whine.

Matt, too, was afraid, he could not have told why; but he put his arms about Lefty whispering, "Be quiet, Lefty. We're safe here. Be quiet, old chap."

He really felt far from safe. He could not have said what he dreaded, for he did not fear the lightning, but he and Lefty both shivered as they crouched by the log waiting for the storm to pass.

At last the rain ceased and the lightning changed from a shifting glare to an occasional vivid flash. Matt decided to crawl out of his shelter and make for the road. He would be glad, he felt, to put the little wood far behind him. No more nights in the woods for him!

He had parted the spruce boughs above the log with this in mind when an especially brilliant flash of lightning made him draw back sharply. There in the road at the foot of the hill, barely a stone's throw from where they lay, was a parked car with its lights turned out. There was something sinister about its dim outline, its lack of lights, its closely curtained sides. Matt crouched down again, keeping a peep-hole between the branches.

It was a long time between the lightning flashes, hours it seemed to Matt, and in the interval Lefty growled savagely and had to be quieted. When

the light came, though Matt had heard no sound, it showed him that two men had left the car and were approaching the bank. In the darkness which followed he heard the crackle of a breaking stick beneath their tread. He missed the next flash, all his attention being devoted to the task of keeping Lefty quiet. Then the trees intervened. The men seemed to be following a less precipitous way along the lower part of the slope. Their voices, which, though they spoke in lowered tones, had been faintly audible to Matt, now seemed to die away, and he was beginning to breathe more freely when he heard them coming back.

The next lightning flash showed them approaching from the brow of the hill. He could not get a really good look at them, because he dared not stir to part the farther branches of the spruce. There had been something about their hushed voices, and the secrecy of their movements which, while it set him free from the apprehension that it might be Uncle Bob, or may be the police, coming for him and Lefty, alarmed him much more than this could possibly have done.

Lefty apparently felt the same way, for Matt could feel the hackles rising along his back, and he had all he could do to keep him from breaking into an angry growl.

"Be quiet, Lefty. Be quiet, sir!" he whispered fiercely, cuffing Lefty softly and keeping a restraining hand on his collar.

The strange men came over the edge of the slope and down toward the little spruce. Then as Matt, sure that he was discovered, was almost ready to make a dash for freedom, they stopped beside the very hollow where he and Lefty had been lying an hour before. Matt could not see them, nor, except for occasional words, could he hear what they were saying. They seemed at first alarmed or puzzled about something, for they talked together in low tones. Matt was sure he heard them say something about a dog—"only a dog" he thought the man said,—and then after a few minutes he overheard something about "digging it out." After that, though it may have been because of what he thought he heard, he came to believe that the men were digging down into the leaves and the loose earth.



He missed the next flash, all his attention being devoted to the task of keeping Lefty quiet.

They must have been around the place for more than an hour, Matt thought. Once one of them went back to the car. Matt believed from the way he walked as he came back that he was carrying something heavy. This time, too, he knew they were using a flashlight, but he dared not move to take a position from which he could see more clearly. At last they went away, following the same path by which they had come. Matt had another glimpse of them at the foot of the hill, but the lightning was less vivid now, and they had put out their light.

One man, he thought, was tall and walked with a limp, but that might have been only the unevenness of the ground. The other was shorter. Both wore soft hats pulled down over their faces; there was nothing to mark them from a hundred other men. But Matt was not trying to mark them. His whole thought was concentrated in the desire that they might leave the place at once, before Lefty barked, or he himself should cry out. As they got into the car in answer to some unheard remark of his companion's one of the men

laughed aloud. It was so startling in the darkness of the woods and seemed altogether so evil and so to be feared, that Matt crouched down beside the log in terror.

It was a long time after they took their places in the car before Matt heard the engine start. They drove on down into the ravine and when he thought them gone he heard a car coming back again and knew it was they. His heart was in his mouth until they passed, and again, when at the top of the hill they waited before turning on to the highway. Then he saw the lights of the car come on and they turned into the main road and sped off city-ward.

Matt and Lefty, after a moment's listening to make sure all was safe, drew themselves from their shelter, and made for the lights of the highway. It would seem good to be once more in that lane of illumination, to know that trucks and even motors would pass, and that he and Lefty were not alone, abandoned to the mercy of those two evil looking men whose memory still haunted the little wood.

## CHAPTER V

### A FRIEND

Gray dawn was beginning to claim for its own the level fields stretching eastward from the dark highway. The lights of on-coming trucks and motors lost their insolent glare in the twilight. A line of orange light began to show between the two darknesses of field and sky. There were fewer vehicles on the road now. Old Calvin Salter, driving for the Toronto Woodington Transport Company, had not passed one for half an hour. He was making good speed northward, and had just passed the little village of Locksley when his lights picked up, on the road ahead, the figures of a boy and a dog. He slowed the truck and studied them. Some farmer's youngster, he decided, scarcely awake yet; the dog was a wonderful fellow. It was as much the collie's elate grace as it was the weary droop of the lad's shoulders as he plodded onward, that made the



old man bring his truck to a halt after he had passed them.

The youngster had stopped, too, as if alarmed but the dog stood, foot raised, head held high, and plumed tail waving slowly, as if he recognized a friend in this stranger who had paused beside him.

"Hello, boy!" old Salter called. "Want a drive?"

Weary as he was there was no hesitation in Matt's answer.

"No, thank you, sir," he said, "I'll walk with my dog."

"Room for both of ye on the truck," the old man answered. "Are you goin' far?"

"To Markton," said Matt. He would have preferred to have the man drive on without asking questions; but he knew that, since he had been stopped, it attracted less attention and provoked less curiosity to answer frankly. "We are going to work on a farm there, both of us—for the summer holidays," he added as an afterthought.

"You're getting an early start. Did you come from Locksley?"

Matt hesitated.

"From near there," he said. "I live in Toronto, but I came out that far and spent the night with—with a friend."

"Well," said Calvin Salter, "comin' up? There's some bags in the back there."

Matt climbed to the back of the truck and whistled Lefty up beside him. The truck was empty save for a couple of barrels and some sort of small machine or engine, which was crated and carefully roped in place. A clean smell of new lumber hung about. Matt and Lefty curled up together on a folded tarpaulin and the truck moved on, gradually working up to the high rate of speed which old Calvin Salter maintained hour after hour in these night drives. He liked having the road all to himself and the sweep of night wind through the cab. It was seldom that he picked up a passenger. He glanced back at the two who were with him now. The boy was fast asleep already, but the big collie lying beside him

had wide-open, watchful eyes. The old man spoke to him softly and he waved a plummy tail and cocked his ears. Salter, rummaging at his feet, found an old coat. With one hand still on the wheel he leaned far out through the back window of the little cab and tossed it toward the sleeping boy.

"Cover ye," he said. "It's cold."

"Thanks," said Matt. He put out a sleepy hand and drew its rough folds over himself and Lefty.

The orange streak grew wider in the sky and changed to gold and the sun came up over the edge of distant fields and sent long dripping shadows across the meadows and the shining road. Warmth began to permeate the chill of the night air, and still the boy slept and the dog kept watch. It was so sound a sleep that he did not even stir when the truck pulled abruptly out of its even path and came to a sudden jolting stop with shrieking brakes. Not Lefty's sudden bark nor the angry shout of the old driver were enough to rouse him from the lethargy of slumber, but they

were followed by a shout of laughter which brought him scrambling, white-faced, to his feet. He was back again in the night woods watching desperate men climbing stealthily into a mud-stained car. It took a moment to make real the truck, the angry driver, and the growling dog.

"Scared, youngster?" Salter said. "No need. It's all over, and all safe. No thanks to those villains. I've met that car before in these parts. They're up to no good, whoever drives it. They must a' took that curve at sixty-five. Never looked what was in front of 'em. See how close we came to bein' over the end of that culvert?"

But Matt had eyes for nothing but the mud-bespattered car already vanishing in the distance.

"Scared ye pretty bad, eh?" said Salter.

"Yes, sir," said Matt. He lay down again, shaking and pulled the coat over Lefty and himself.

Ten minutes later Salter shouted to him to know what direction from Markton was the farm to which they were going. "No use driving right past it," he said.

Matt scrambled to a sitting posture and fumbling in his pocket produced Mr. McHarg's card. He handed it up to Salter through the back window of the cab.

"I don't know," he said. "He just gave me this card. His mail route number is '4'. Does that tell?"

"'Twould if we lived roundabout here," answered the old man, studying the card. Presently he stopped the truck to ask a boy who was bringing cows from pasture. The boy came over to the truck.

"Hullo!" he said to Matt shyly, and "Hullo you!" to Lefty.

They both acknowledged his salutation, Lefty with pricked ears and waving tail. He gave directions promptly and clearly. You drove clear through Markton. Beyond, nearly two miles, there was a church on a corner, a white church with a large shed on one side and a graveyard on the other. You turned there to the west and drove nearly half a mile before you found the McHarg gate. It was a stone house, well back from the

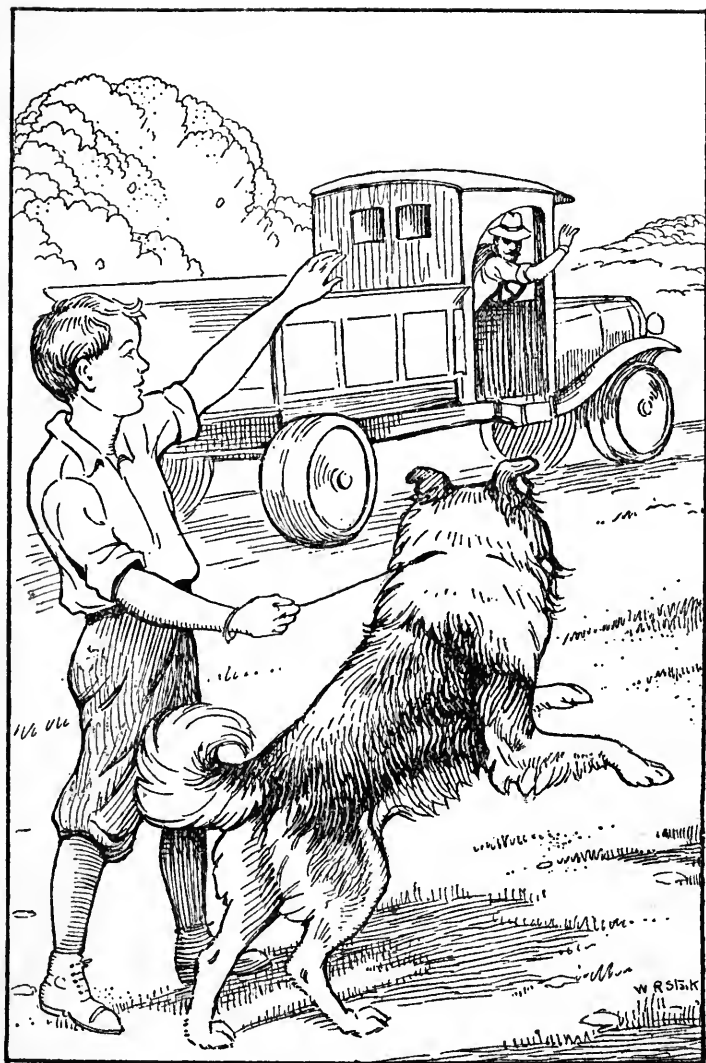
road with gable windows and a wind-break of spruce. But you couldn't miss it. His name would be on the mail box.

Salter thanked him and they drove on. Looking back Matt watched the boy and his cows with interest. "You'n I'll be doing that, Lefty," he said.

They made a stop in Markton but Matt felt it wise to attract no attention. He rightly divined that Lefty was the conspicuous member of the firm, and, making him lie down, he screened them both from observation with the tarpaulin. Outside the town he breathed more freely. When the truck stopped beside the little church he and Lefty scrambled to the ground. He came around to the side of the cab.

"You were awfully good to both of us," he said, "to give us a ride. Thanks."

"I come through here most every night, with a load o' lumber," Salter answered. "Perhaps when you're goin' back home to school I can give the both of you a ride home. But maybe you'd rather walk than get up at two or three in the morning."



Matt waved his hand and Lefty barked excitedly.

"Oh no!" Matt said. "It would be fun. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, son. Good-bye, old fellow! Good luck to you both."

"Good-bye."

The engine picked up and the truck started slowly, then gathered speed.

Matt waved his hat and Lefty barked excitedly. The old man leaned out and waved a brown hand. Then he was gone and Matt and Lefty turned rather soberly into the side-road. They were hungry and the rest in the truck had showed one of them at least how very stiff and tired he could be.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE FARM

There were few people about so early in the morning, and Matt and Lefty met no one in the half-mile to the farm. As the boy had said, there was no trouble in finding the place. It was a spacious stone cottage with a wide verandah across the front and rows of gable windows in each of the four slopes of the roof. There were lilac bushes on either side with still a few late blooms, and climbing rose bushes were trained against the white posts of the verandah. In front of the house there was a smooth, well-trimmed lawn with a gravel walk bordered by prim flower beds, which led from a white wicket gate straight to the verandah steps and the front door. Some ten feet from the verandah, paths just as neat and just as carefully bordered branched off to two small gates on either side of the lawn. One of these opened into the orchard and the other into the drive-lane.

Since it seemed better to make his appearance at the back door, Matt followed the latter and found himself in a wide lane which opened at one end to the road, and at the other, once past the house, into a spacious barnyard beyond which lay a cluster of barns and farm buildings. The house faced the south and on this eastern side there was a wind-break of tall pines bordering the lane. There was no sign of anyone about, so Matt rapped, at first timidly, then more loudly, on the kitchen door. When he received no response he tried another door at the back, and, when he had no better luck, summoned courage to peal the bell on the massive front door. Nobody came, and after waiting for ten or fifteen minutes he decided that perhaps all the people who lived there were at the barn. He and Lefty made their way across the yard to the closed doors of the drive-barn. They were fastened with a huge bar and Matt drew it aside and stepped in.

The air was sweet with clover and timothy for the season was early and most of the hay was already cut. On either side of the drive-barn it was piled high in the mows, and bright wisps of

it lay on the floor, and even clung to the round rungs of the ladders. Long slanting shafts of light fell from every sunward crack, and above, a pair of pigeons cooed in the rafters and swallows darted in and out of the small open windows high under the gable eaves. There was a little stir from the stables below, and Matt raised his voice in a shout.

At once pandemonium broke out below stairs. Squeals and unearthly cries came to Matt's ears. Though he was sure they must be from the pigs, Matt was appalled at the din. While he paused, uncertain what to do, he became conscious of approaching sounds. He quieted Lefty, who had begun to growl, and listened anxiously. There were the sounds of animals running; a dog's sharp yelp, which would have started Lefty again but for Matt's restraining hand; then the sound of men's voices, a door swung open below and cattle making their way into the stalls. Matt and Lefty, going downstairs into the feed corridor below, were confronted by long rows of Holstein faces. The squeals had almost ceased now, and coming toward them along the corridor, was a man carry-

ing a couple of empty pails. He paused in surprise at sight of the boy, and Matt, who had expected to see Mr. McHarg, came forward shyly.

"Is Mr. McHarg here?" he asked.

"No, he ain't. Who are you?"

"Can you tell me where he is?" Matt persisted. "I came out to see if I could get a job on the farm, me and Lefty."

The man looked with interest at the yellow dog, but he laughed at Matt's words.

"Well," he said, "I guess I kin tell you all you need to know. McHarg's away—no tellin' when he'll be back. But he don't need no help. He has two men workin' for him already."

"Has he got a *boy*?" Matt asked with a spark of hope.

The man laughed.

"No, he hasn't got a boy—nor a dog; but he would have if he needed 'em. No, sir! You're out of luck. "Maxwell!"—he raised his voice, "see what I got here!"

An older man put his head through one of the

mangers and looked suspiciously into the passageway.

"Tramp, eh?" he said, then at sight of the boy, "Well, I never! Where'd you come from, Kid? Where did you get that dog?"

"Home," said Matt, briefly. "I want a job, me and Lefty."

"Well 'me and Lefty' won't get no jobs on this ranch. It's not a good place, either for boys or dogs. You'd better clear out."

The man's voice was threatening, but his face was not unkind. Matt took heart to press the point.

"Are you sure?" he said. "We can do almost anything."

"Well," Maxwell answered gruffly, "the only thing for you to do at present is to take yourself and your dog off this farm *at once*. Start *now*!"

Matt was no beggar, but he was desperately hungry. The long tramp back seemed a tremendous undertaking, and his own hunger made him aware that Lefty would be ravenous.

"Please," he asked, "would you give Lefty a drink of milk?"

"Yes, both of you," the older man said quickly. "Here, Archie, you milk some into the bottom of that pail."

"Please may I watch you?" Matt cried with interest. He had never seen anybody milk a cow.

It looked so easy that he ventured a petition.

"May I try—just once?"

"No," said the man, and then, at his look of disappointment, "Well, here!"

It wasn't so easy as it looked, but Matt liked the feel of the big gentle creature so near him. At first he couldn't get any milk at all, and then when it did come, though Matt couldn't see why, he spurted it over the man's blue overalls, and into Lefty's eyes as he stood watching with head cocked gravely on one side.

"There, that's enough!" Archie said, "Take your drink," and, as Matt hesitated, "Drink from the pail."

Matt lifted the pail, put his lips to the rim, and downed the warm foamy fluid. He set the pail down and wiped his lips.

"Had enough, youngster?"

"Yes, thanks," said Matt.

He would have liked more, but he was afraid of robbing Lefty.

The man poured the remainder of the milk into another pail, and Lefty dipped a lapping red tongue into the creamy liquid.

"It's well old Rover isn't here," the younger man said.

"Is he your dog?" asked Matt quickly. "Where is he? Is he cross?"

"He's taking the young cattle back to pasture. No, he ain't cross, but he'd just naturally eat up that yellow dog of yours."

Matt's pride was touched.

"Bet you he wouldn't!" he cried. "Bet you a quarter! You don't know Lefty."

"All right," said the man, "I'll whistle him up and they can fight it out."

"All right," said Matt defiantly, "you do!" But Maxwell put a stop to such nonsense.

"Here," he growled, "you know very well no

boy nor dog should loiter around this farm. Off with you, boy. If I catch you or that yellow brute of yours on this farm after the next ten minutes, I'll hand you both over to the police."

It was a threat which, under the circumstances, had exceeding weight. Matt left the barn with alacrity, Lefty at his heels.

"Thanks for the milk," he called back remembering his manners.

But Maxwell seemed to find something suspicious in this, for he shouted to them to "hurry off, now" or it would be the worse for them.

Boy and dog began the long homeward trek in a mood of apprehension and discouragement. With each step this feeling grew more pronounced. Matt's feet lagged, and even Lefty, shorn of his morning's gaiety, walked with head low and drooping tail. They were tired, and in spite of the drink of milk, hungry. Matt had no plan for future action and they moved more and more slowly. What was the use of walking when they didn't know where they were going?

On the left side as they walked toward the





Lefty dipped a lapping red tongue into the creamy liquid.

highway there was a woods, maple and birch, with occasional spruce and cedar, which came close to the road fence. The trees grew close, and there were patches of coppice and undergrowth. Where the horizontal boughs of a low beech gave promise of shade, Matt turned from the road and threw himself down in the warm grass beside the fence. Lefty came and nuzzled his yellow face against Matt's and licked his cheek, and at that the boy began to sob; for it had been borne in upon him during their slow progress from the farm that he must give up this dear and faithful and unfailing chum. He could not take him back to Toronto: there was too much danger for him there. Mr. McHarg had offered to buy him, so perhaps he would be willing to keep him for a year or two until Matt could find a place to work where he could keep a dog. If only Mr. McHarg were home, or if they could find a way to live until he returned!

They had spent one night in the woods, a night of horror. Matt could not bring himself to think of spending another such night. If they could find something to eat, however, they might man-

age to sleep somewhere near the house or barns and yet escape detection. It seemed to be the only thing there was to do. At any rate they could stay in hiding through the day, and if Mr. McHarg had not come by night, they could, if the worst came to the worst, return with the old man who drove the Woodington truck.

With a plan even partially formulated Matt's spirits began to rise. The first move would be to find something to eat, and Matt decided he would buy a meal at some farm-house door. He rolled over and gave Yellow Fellow a rough hug.

"Come on, Lefty," he said, "let's find our breakfast."

## CHAPTER VII

### A DISCOVERY

Intent on finding some place which they might establish as a sort of headquarters, and where, provided his plan of obtaining food worked out, they might remain hidden until Mr. McHarg's return, Matt climbed the rail-fence and, followed by the eager Lefty, made his way into the woods. He moved very cautiously, making little noise, as his Scout training had taught him, and paused to investigate clumps of undergrowth or sheltered hollows for a suitable hiding-place. But whenever he imagined himself and Lefty snuggled down into some such place he had a horrid memory of that hour in the woods near Locksley, and hurried on to find some safer and more hidden spot.

This quest had lasted some half hour or more and had brought him almost to the middle of the little patch of woods when suddenly Lefty, with pricked ears, bounded away through the undergrowth. A moment later Matt heard his excited

barking, and mingled with it, short little yapping barks which sounded like a dog's and yet, somehow, different. Matt began to run through the woods. He dared not call Lefty aloud, and, as he ran, he listened fearfully for voices—but there were none. Only Lefty's barking broke the stillness of the woods. The excited answering barks had ceased.

He was the more surprised, therefore, when, breaking through a thicket of dogwood into a more open space in the woods, he found himself facing an enclosure of wire netting perhaps eight or nine feet in height. Inside of this, in smaller enclosures, also of wire, slim black animals with bushy tails and pointed ears were dashing about in fright, trying to climb the shaking wire walls, and poking alert heads out of the queer chutes which led to their wooden kennels, or even desperately digging down into the soft dark earth which formed the floor of their enclosure. Matt knew in an instant that they were foxes. Here in the middle of the woods he had found a black fox ranch.

At his first stern command Lefty had fallen silent, and Matt, in terror lest some of the little black fellows scrambling up the wire should suffer a broken leg or should somehow manage to escape altogether, hastily withdrew the offending member of his firm. He ran some little distance back into the woods and pulling off his coat threw it to the ground.

"Watch that, Lefty," he cried, and, at Lefty's whine of disappointment, "watch it, sir! You mustn't come! Be quiet!"

Then he ran back again to study his find. He was relieved to see that the foxes did not seem to notice him, once Lefty was out of sight and quiet. For a long time he watched from the thicket. Then, when the last frightened fox had clambered down from the wire, he came very slowly and quietly toward the pens. The foxes were evidently used to people being about them. They watched him with inquisitive pointed ears and even came close to the wire walls of their pens while he stood with face pressed against the guard-wall, as if they hoped he might feed them. Em-

boldened by this attitude Matt even tried the gate in the outer wire enclosure; but it was, as he had expected, fastened with a padlock and quite too strongly built to be shoved or wrenched from its hinges, even if Matt had had any such idea.

For two hours or more he hung about the pens, in love with the wild sleek beauty of the foxes. There were twelve wire pens inside the guard fence. In two of these, so far as Matt could tell, there were no foxes, and in one or two others only one. But there were in each enclosure funny little wooden kennels without windows, and with long angular tunnels or chutes of wood leading into them. Whether foxes were hidden in these Matt could only guess. What delighted him above all were the families of young foxes which, as the morning wore on, got over their fright at Lefty and came out and played together with their mothers like little kittens. There were two, three, sometimes four, of the fox puppies in a family.

He forgot to be hungry, forgot his alarms and perplexities; even forgot the waiting Lefty, in his delight over the foxes. He prowled around

them happily and discovered the meat-house on the edge of the woods, packed with ice, and well-stocked now with meat and fish. He didn't like the smell of it in spite of its sweet fresh sawdust. He came out gingerly, painstakingly covering his tracks in the sawdust floor, and fastened the door with care. There was a pump near, too, he discovered, with a raised tank and pipes which led to the various pens.

What interested Matt most of all was a funny little Robinson Crusoe sort of house built on a raised platform which had been made by nailing timbers to four trees. The house was quite sheltered by branches except on the side toward the fox pens, where they had been cut clean away to give an unobstructed view. Set in this side, a couple of feet above the floor, was a great glass window, with two broken panes, reaching almost to the roof and extending the full width of the wall. Matt divined that it was a sort of watch-tower from which one could keep an eye on the foxes. It was twenty feet or more from the pen and just in the edge of the woods. After a careful survey, which decided him that no one



was in or near the tower, Matt examined it with great curiosity. It was evident that it had not been used for weeks, for the grass was high and untrodden under the trees. On the side most distant from the pens there was a door, but there was no apparent means of reaching it. The house was set on a sort of platform, which extended on all sides beyond the four tree-trunks which formed its posts.

Matt studied the tower with quickening interest. What a wonderful hiding-place it would make for himself and Lefty! If Lefty were quiet he did not believe that the foxes would be very much frightened. They had not seemed to mind him once he had stopped barking. At any rate it was well worth investigating if only he could find a way to reach it, and, if it proved suitable, a way to get Lefty up after him. Hunting about the edge of the woods for a big pole, by means of which he hoped he might climb to the platform, he was fortunate enough to discover the missing ladder. It had evidently been used by someone who wanted to fix the meat-house roof,

for it was still leaning against it on the woods' side, almost hidden by low branches. Matt decided, examining it, that it must have been there for a long time, for the ferns had grown between and around its lower rungs so that he could not move it without tearing them from the soft earth. This made him the more secure in his faith in the new hiding-place. He carried the ladder, not without a good deal of terror lest he be discovered, to the woods' side of the platform, and, placed it where he thought it least likely to attract attention. Then he climbed nimbly up to the tower.

It was, as he guessed, a tiny room, barely six feet square. A bunk, on the foot of which were a couple of folded blankets, ran along one end, and there was a rough shelf which might have served as a table. A small coal-oil heater, empty of oil, stood on an old chair in one corner, and, on a couple of wooden pegs above the couch, was an old-fashioned long-barrelled shot-gun. Matt didn't know much about guns—he certainly wouldn't touch this one—but he was, nevertheless, vaguely glad that it was there. It was, somehow, more adventurous to have a gun about.

He studied the little room with a view to possible discovery. The interior, save for that couple of feet of wall below the window, was entirely visible from the pens. But he and Lefty need not take possession of the tower until it had grown dark. Then they would pull their ladder up to the platform after them, and lean it against one of the trees. If anybody came before it had grown quite dark they could crouch down close under cover of the two-foot wall. Matt knew he could depend on Lefty to keep quiet under his restraining hand.

He was about to make his way down when a commotion among the foxes made him pause. While he waited, alert, he heard the sound of a nearing whistle. There was no time to conceal the ladder. Matt lay down close to the wall beneath the window. He heard the new-comer entering the meat-house, then moving about among the pens, and decided, because of the excited barking and snarling which he heard, that his little black neighbours were getting their dinner. It took a long time, and once Matt raised his head, thinking that the man must be gone.

But he was in one of the pens, ladling what looked like some sort of porridge into a metal dish, while four inquisitive fox puppies watched him from a distance well out of reach. Matt recognized him as the older of the two men who had been in the barn, and ducked down again in terror. He was immensely relieved when at last he heard him going off through the woods in the opposite direction to that in which he had come. He had not even glanced at the tower, nor missed the ladder from the meat-house wall. Neither—and this was a possibility over which Matt had been quite as much alarmed—had Lefty proved false to his charge and come dashing in to discover the cause of the disturbance.

It was nearly an hour before Matt dared to leave the tower. Then he climbed down in desperate haste, hid the ladder in the underbrush, and, in spite of the recognized need for caution, fairly raced through the woods winged by a sudden terror that some dreadful thing might have happened Yellow Fellow while he was away.

At sound of his coming Lefty leaped to his feet

and barked joyously, subsiding at Matt's command into little whines of delight. Matt dropped a trembling hand on his collar.

"Come out of this," he whispered.

It was not until they found themselves once more on Yonge Street that Matt breathed quite freely. They had run most of the way, and now they sat down in the shade of the church to rest.

"I've got a peach of a place for us to keep house in," Matt confided. "But, gee! I was scared for awhile."

In the exuberance of his returning spirits he rolled Lefty over and over on the warm grass, tussling with him, and laughing at his short excited barks. But too much responsibility rested on Matt's shoulders as leader of the expedition, and he was too hungry and tired to enjoy this play for long.

"Come on." he said at last, soberly enough, "let's go and buy something to eat."

Standing up, he shoved a hand into his coat pocket, and withdrew it empty. Puzzled by this he searched the other pockets of which he was

possessed. They were empty. From his trousers' pocket he drew his Scout knife, nothing more.

But he had had more. Where was the handful of string of which he had attempted to make a leash? Where was the handkerchief with which Aunt Jo had supplied him yesterday morning? And above all, where was the change from Mr. McHarg's two dollar bill?

"Gee," said Matt, "it's gone!"

For a moment he was appalled by this discovery. Lefty, at sight of his anxious face, came closer, and shoved a cold nose against his hand. Matt looked down at him.

"Well, old chap," he said at last, "we're not beaten yet, anyhow! If we can't buy a breakfast I guess we can earn one."

## CHAPTER VIII

### EARNING A DINNER

At the cross-roads Matt paused undecided.

"Which way, Lefty?" he said. "Up or down? It's a serious matter."

But Lefty only pressed close against Matt as if refusing the responsibility of leading the expedition, and presently Matt turned hesitating footsteps northward, lured, perhaps, by the shining whiteness of a small frame house which faced the highway from its sheltering apple trees a little distance beyond the cross-road. Its immaculate, close-trimmed grass, lilac and syringa shaded, and its flower-bordered walks, its spotless verandah and its snowy curtains became more apparent as they neared the little gate which gave an entrance to its square of lawn. Matt would have passed it by. To tell the truth he was rather appalled by its neatness. Aunt Jo was always neat. Neatness and hardness to his mind went somehow together.

Lefty, however, was of other mind. He was over the low gate, a flash of yellow; up the stone-flagged walk; up on the shining verandah; off again in pursuit of a white streak of kitten which dashed madly from the safety of a sunlit dream and disappeared around the side of the house.

Matt followed hastily, to find Lefty making friends with a white-haired old lady, who scolded him in a gentle voice and stroked his head and rubbed behind his ears in the way which all dogs love. Matt took immediate courage. Pulling off his cap, he came up to the pair and made such apology as he could for Lefty.

"I don't believe he'd really hurt the kitten," he said. "I'm sure he was only in play, though he is awfully hungry."

"He forgot to explain to Fluff-Enough that it was only play. If he had he might have saved her a scare," the old lady rejoined, laughing. Then she looked again at the boy.

"Very hungry, is he?" she said. "Are you very hungry, too?"

"Yes," said Matt, "we—we haven't had any breakfast."



"Breakfast—it's just dinner time! Where do you belong? And how did you get away without breakfast? What is your name, my boy?"

"Matt Carewe, and my dog is Lefty. We live in Toronto, but we got a drive out here this morning. I hoped we could find work out here—on a farm; but the man we thought would take us had a man—two men—and a dog already."

"Why didn't you get breakfast before you started?"

"We came in a truck, early."

"And they did not give you breakfast at the farm?"

"No. Mr. McHarg was away."

"McHarg! Yes, he *is* away. What made you think he'd hire you?"

"I didn't really think so. I just hoped he would."

"Two men! I thought Tom Andrews went home sick! Oh, that'd be Mr. Maxwell and his man. They'd be looking after the place while Mr. McHarg's away, feeding his stock and caring for the foxes!"

"Was it their dog?" Matt asked eagerly.

"A big black and white one? Yes. That'd be Maxwell's. Your dog there is a fine fellow."

"Yes," said Matt absently. "Do you think he'd want a boy and a dog? Do you know when he's coming back?"

"Mr. McHarg? He's only gone for a day or so. He might be back any time now. But oh, I don't believe he'd want a boy," the old lady said, "he lives all alone—no women-folk. If he wanted a boy at all it would be a bigger one than you."

Matt's face fell.

"I can work—hard," he volunteered, "when I'm not hungry."

At this the old lady laughed softly.

"Come on into the kitchen," she said, "I'll give you both some dinner."

"Couldn't we eat it right out here?" Matt said, remembering Aunt Jo's clean floors.

The old lady hesitated.

"Well, perhaps you had better," she said, "I daresay poor Fluff-Enough is hiding under the

stove, thanking the good Lord for her feet. Sit down, then. I'll get you something."

"Thanks," said Matt. "Isn't there some work we could do to pay you? We haven't any money."

"We'll see," said their benefactress, bustling away.

Matt sat down on the edge of the verandah and looked out over an orderly garden where vegetables grew side by side with petunias, nasturtiums, sweet peas, four o'clocks, and other old-fashioned blossoms for which he had no name. It was not long until the old lady returned with a tray. She had some trouble with the screen door and Matt jumped to help her.

"That's the good boy," she said, giving the tray over into his hands. "That plate of scraps and the big bone is for your dog. What did you call him?"

"Lefty," said Matt. "That's a great dinner! Thanks!"

He sat down again on the edge of the verandah with the tray beside him and, having placed

Lefty's plate on the ground, began to eat. When he was through he offered shyly to cut the lawn, or split kindling or do anything which would help to pay for the meal.

"I'll keep Lefty close to me," he said, "and he won't worry your kitten again."

"What do you intend to do?" the old lady asked him. "I mean how are you going to get back to Toronto?"

"I guess we'll have to walk," said Matt. He hesitated, but in fear of being sent home decided to keep his own counsel. She was good, this kind old woman, and very generous, but far too neat to be trusted.

She was thrusting another favour upon him.

"If you'll run over my front lawn again with the mower," she said, "while you're doing it, I'll put up a parcel of supper for you and your big dog. Too bad to come away out here and be disappointed. You seem to be a nice sort of boy, and you have a nice dog."

"Oh, thank you—"



He sat down on the edge of the verandah with the tray beside him.

"Mrs. Gray," the old lady said as Matt hesitated for a word.

"Thank you, Mrs. Gray. We'll be glad to. Only—it's so short. It doesn't really seem enough to do for all that."

"Oh yes it is, quite plenty. I often go over it twice myself without waiting long between. It's easier to cut."

Matt went cheerfully to his task. Hunger was cared for, at least for the time being. Perhaps other perplexities would work themselves out as well. He was more ready to think so since he had eaten. The parcel of supper was a generous one.

"Oh, that's great!" Matt said, again falling back on an over-used word. "Thank you so much! If I ever get a chance I'll come and mow the lawn again for you. It's nothing at all to do."

He and Lefty said good-bye then, and Lefty's yellow head was patted and stroked, and Matt was warned again and again about the danger from cars on the highway. Then both had a drink from the pump and with a final "thanks ever so much!" and a final friendly wave of a yel-

low tail the travellers found themselves once more on the highway. They walked back to the cross-roads and there, waiting for a time when traffic was most dense and they were least likely to be seen from the white cottage, turned into the side road and followed it westward toward the McHarg farm-house.

Since he had learned from Mrs. Gray that the foxes were Mr. McHarg's, Matt decided that the McHarg farm must run right to the corner, though the house was on the cross-road. He wished she had said more about the foxes; there were a hundred questions he would have liked to ask but the fact that they had planned to take possession of the watch-tower kept him silent. Nobody must dream they were there until Mr. McHarg came home. There were two or three cleared fields along the highway, and back of them the woods began. It was not a large woods; Matt thought the fox-runs must be not far from its edge on the side toward the house. There could not be more than fifteen or twenty acres, but it was densely grown and there were patches of undergrowth which might make a good hiding-place.

Matt had not intended to take up his abode in the look-out until darkness approached, but after last night's experience he had a lurking fear of the woods.

"We'll just go up and see if the old house looks as if Mr. McHarg had got home," he decided.

They moved very carefully indeed, but the whole farm seemed deserted. The farm-house lay so warm and homelike and inviting in the sunshine that Matt lingered about it as long as he dared. Taking advantage of the shelter of its trees and shrubs, he examined it on every side. More and more he felt that it was an ideal home for any boy and any dog. He discovered things about it of which McHarg was absolutely unaware. He even peered through its windows, and he had a very real struggle to keep himself from climbing through an open kitchen window which he found at the opposite side from the drive, almost hidden by a close-growing group of lilacs. He knew there were electric lights and telephone wires and in the living-room a closed piano and a radio. It was like being driven out of Eden



when at last the lengthening shadows warned him that the men might come to do the evening chores.

He and Lefty made their sober way back along the road to the edge of the woods, and lay down in the little hollow under the beech tree into which they had crept earlier in the morning. It was Matt's plan to wait here until he was sure that the foxes had been fed for the evening, and then to climb into the tower house. While they waited he divided between them the generous supper which Mrs. Gray had given them. He had intended to save a little for breakfast but, though he put it aside before they began to eat, they were both so hungry after their unaccustomed day in the open air that bit by bit this breakfast was annexed to supper. Then they lay down together to wait until Matt thought it safe to make their way to the tower. The sunshine lay warm about their sheltered hollow, bees hummed and the road was very still. It was not long until boy and dog, tired with the unusual happenings of the day, were both fast asleep.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE ALARM

Gray dusk lay on the deserted road when Matt awoke. He rose stiffly and Lefty jumped to his feet with an eager whine. It was almost dark in the woods, and with a sinking heart Matt realized that they had overslept. He had had no notion of making his way through that unexplored woods—or, since last night, through any woods at all—by dark.

His heart beat in his throat.

"Come on," he said thickly, and, followed by the collie, once more negotiated the fence. They found themselves in the edge of the thick, dark wood and Matt, trying to remember the path which he had followed in the morning, made his way with what haste he might, toward its centre. There was still gray twilight in the open spaces, and once well in among the trees, Matt, though he continued to walk warily, lost his fear. It was not long before they came to the pens, barely to

be distinguished in the dusk, and Matt found his ladder again and placed it, as he had in the morning, against the platform on which the look-out was built.

He had spent much time puzzling just how Yellow Fellow was going to climb that ladder, and it proved no easy job. When it was finally accomplished, at the risk of a fall from every step, and much to the big dog's discomfort, for he had never before undergone so much of hugging and boosting and ladder rungs offered a very precarious hold to his scrambling feet, boy and dog were glad to lie on the floor of the look-out and draw long breaths after such strenuous exertion.

But Matt's labours were not over. He had been glad to find that the foxes did not seem as afraid of Lefty as they had been in the morning. To-night he took the precaution to go well around the pens. He breathed more freely when he found his little neighbours were so undisturbed. Perhaps, he thought, they were used to a dog, and would not have objected to Lefty's presence in the morning had he not barked at them. Matt was surprised to find them so wide

awake and alert. There seemed twice, four times, as many as in the morning, and they ran to the sides of the enclosures and poked inquisitive noses against the wire, and even gave tentative little yaps which brought Matt's heart to his mouth. But they evinced no real fear, and Matt, who had expected to find them asleep, ceased to worry about them proving tell-tales and alarm the men on the next farm who, as he had learned from the old lady in the white cottage, were responsible for their care.

After a few minutes Matt got to his feet and, moving as softly as possible, tried to draw up the ladder. It was a harder task than he had anticipated, and at last he gave it up in despair. He did not feel quite content, however, to leave this evident link with the lower world, and after some consideration he adopted another plan. He had often climbed trees and swung to the ground from their branches, and now he studied the neighbouring trees with this in view. Being birches they were most excellently fitted to his need. Matt proceeded to lay hold of a long branch which grew within reach and let himself swing toward

the ground. The plan worked. There was a drop of only two or three feet after his hands left the branch. It did not take long to climb back by way of the ladder, and once on the platform again, to gently shove that unnecessary encumbrance to the ground where it fell with a soft thud.

Inside the tower Matt had a real Robinson Crusoe feeling among the trees; and began for the first time to really enjoy the adventure. He crossed to the big glass window, and peering out, tried to discover the doings of his little neighbours. Through the branches the sky in the west was still red and a little feather of moon hung in the darkness at its edge. A few big stars already shone above the tree-tops, and in the clearing there was still enough light for Matt to distinguish the dark forms of the foxes moving busily about the enclosures, jumping to the tops of their wooden houses, or busying themselves in tunnelling a way toward the coveted freedom of the woods. Matt could have watched them all night long with interest, but prudence warned him that he must make use of the last glimmer of daylight to settle himself and Lefty in their new quarters.

He had in his pocket a few cherished matches, and one of these he now struck to verify his memory of the morning visit regarding the interior of the tower. Satisfied that there had been no change in the little room he proceeded to make things snug for the night.

He pulled the stretcher over close to the window, spread the blankets upon it, bunching them up to make a sort of pillow at the top. Then he crawled up on it, disposing himself so that he might, as long as it was light enough, keep watch of his lively little neighbours in the wire enclosures below. Lastly he coaxed Lefty up beside him, scolding and cuffing him into silence when his lifted ears and his low gruff growls showed that he, too, shared Matt's interest in the foxes. Boy and dog snuggled close, their warm bodies pressed together by the sagging springs of the old stretcher. Lefty's soft tongue caressed Matt's hand. Now and then he stirred a little or growled uneasily as some strange new noise came to his alert ears. At first whenever this happened, Matt sat up, and strained his ears for some sound. Sometimes he could distinguish the crackle of a

twig in the woods, but for the most part he could not hear anything beyond a stir of branches, or a fox's playful bark. Even before the little curled moon had disappeared behind the tree-tops he had lost all feeling of strangeness or alarm.

"Shut up, Lefty!" he said drowsily when the big dog stirred or growled.

It was not long before he ceased even these perfunctory admonitions, being far too sound asleep for Lefty's occasional low growls to penetrate his consciousness.

But the dog did not sleep. He crouched alongside Matt with his long, sharp nose resting on his paws, his ears alert, his eyes wide to the increasing darkness. An owl came and hooted over their heads and he growled uneasily. But he was not afraid of owls, which only flapped wide wings and asked "Who? Who? Who?" of the night. Matt, who might have been afraid, slept on. The little moon had deserted them long before and, though the sky was a-glimmer with all the brilliancy of the summer stars, down there in the woods there was a blackness, velvety, impenetrable. The

watch-tower in the tree was an inky pool of darkness.

Lefty had kept guard thus while the big dipper swung almost a quarter of its circle about the north star before anything happened that seemed really sufficient cause for investigation. Then some different note in his low growl, some stiffening of all his muscles into tautness, perhaps some unexpressed call from dog-mind to boy-mind, brought Matt upright from dazed sleep. At the same instant Lefty leaped from the stretcher. Matt's quick hand smothered a bark.

"Be quiet!" he whispered. "Hush!"

He too slipped from the stretcher and dropped on his knees beside it, pulling Lefty close to him. Both listened intently.





He crouched alongside Matt, his ears alert, his eyes wide to the increasing darkness.

## CHAPTER X

### MARAUDERS

At first, and for some minutes, Matt could hear nothing. But Lefty never ceased the low angry growl, which at Matt's least permission would have broken into a bark. Matt could feel the hackles rising along his back and the tremor of excitement which shook his whole body.

"Oh, Lefty, *be quiet*," he begged. "Listen! Quiet now!"

He was sure he had heard voices and the snap of a twig.

Then there was silence for so long that, if it had not been for Lefty's excitement, Matt would have thought it a dream.

Just as he began to breathe more freely, a long sinister beam of light flashed out from the woods, played for a moment on the galvanized wire fencing of the fox-pens and fell away into darkness. Somebody was coming with a flashlight!

Matt crouched below the level of the window-sill. He pulled Lefty down beside him, and, holding him down by main force, urged him to silence with whispered admonitions. He could hear low voices, barely audible. The reflection of the flashlight lit the little room like day: it had been turned on the tower and withdrawn. Matt did not dare to lift his head. His heart beat so terribly in his ears that at first he could hear no sound. Then, as he came to believe they were undiscovered and grew less frightened, he became conscious of a metallic clicking sound, repeated at what seemed to him to be almost regular intervals. Occasionally, too, he caught the exchange of brief words, an order, perhaps, and its acceptance.

He was appalled that the men were not going on toward the house as he had expected. Instead they were waiting, doing something near the pens. Matt wondered what they were trying to do. He even pictured them planning some sort of assault on the little watch-tower. At last, impelled by terror, he raised his head very slowly until he could see over the window-sill. His first feeling

was one of relief. The men were not thinking of the tower. They were busy at the end of the enclosure nearest the side-road and therefore farthest from the look-out. A circle of light there showed only hands, gleaming white, moving close to the wires, and a glint of steel. Matt heard more plainly the sharp metallic clicking. In an instant he knew what they were doing. They were cutting the wires! Making a way into the pens! They were going to steal the foxes!

He could hear running feet in the enclosure; could imagine the terror of the frightened animals, all too vividly indeed, because it was his own terror also. He strained his eyes trying to discover through the darkness what lay behind that sinister cone of light. There were, he thought, only two men, though he could not be quite sure. One held the light while the other used the pliers. As he watched he saw the man who was not working raise the flashlight and begin to circle the little clearing with its beam. The sound ceased, while both men watched intently. The light moved slowly. Before it reached the tower Matt was flat down on the floor, almost smothering Lefty in his

fear lest he should betray them. But the light did not pause—it swept the little room and was gone. Evidently the men knew well that the watch-tower was not used.

Matt decided that he and Lefty need only keep quiet to ensure their safety. But he had little confidence in Lefty. The dog seemed obsessed with some strange excitement that was more of anger than fear. Matt bent all his energies to quieting him.

“Hush Lefty! Be quiet!” he whispered. “We’re all right, Yellow Fellow. We’re all right if you’ll only be still.”

It seemed hours that he lay there, not daring to take his hands away from Lefty’s head, where they hovered giving trembling caresses and ready to smother back the slightest sound.

By and by he noticed that the noise of the clip-pers had ceased. There was only a creaking of wire and low words. Matt dared another look. One of the men—he could see him plainly now near the apex of the cone of light—had made his way into the enclosure, and was entering the gate

of one of the smaller yards. It was the farthest from the tower, but Matt, from the vantage of his look-out, could see distinctly wherever that wicked circle of light illumined the little clearing.

It never illumined a face, and it was a sort of intuition, or an unconscious memory of tones and voices, which made Matt believe that these marauders were the mysterious men whom he had seen last night in the woods. Yet it could scarcely have been their voices which betrayed them, for they seldom spoke, and never above a gruff murmur. Near as he was, and in spite of the open window, Matt caught no words.

Now the light illumined the man's feet and Matt could see that he was carrying a heavy stick or club with a knobbed end. As he watched, fascinated, the brilliant circle played over the enclosure picking out the dark feeding trough, the yellow of the new board kennels, the quick moving bodies of the frightened foxes. It rested at last in the farthest corner where two or three young ones had taken refuge in a confused heap of shining black fur, scrambling legs and moving

tails. As the man with the club came near they huddled closer. Matt turned away but he could not close his ears to the sickening thud of the club. The man who swung it was evidently an expert. There was no sound from the foxes but Matt could hear the shaking of the wire as they climbed desperately for safety.

It was more than the boy could bear. Forgetting Lefty, forgetting everything, he rose to his feet, crying, and stumbled over Yellow Fellow, who, liberated, let loose such a volley of barks that the black woods about the clearing rang with his anger. Matt scarcely heard him. In that second of light when he had seen the foxes huddling under the raised club, he had remembered the gun which hung behind him on the wall. He must somehow manage to fire it, for it would call the men from the farm. There was no other way of bringing them quickly enough. He had once fired Uncle Bob's rifle.—A gun was different. He had never fired a gun. But he must try. He dragged the old chair over to the wall, clambered on to it, and, felt above his head for the gun. He lifted it from the pegs with hands that trembled.

It was heavy, far heavier than he had guessed. It slipped from his hands and slid to the floor. As it fell its trigger caught in the rough boarding of the wall and the look-out rocked with the detonation of its explosion.

For a time Matt was too frightened and stunned to think, but with his first breath, he cried aloud to Lefty. He was sure that Yellow Fellow must have been shot, but the big dog hurled himself against him, still barking furiously. Matt threw his arms around him and buried his face in his yellow coat. Lefty, however, refused endearments. He bounded back to the window, barking, barking, barking.



## CHAPTER IX

### IN SEARCH OF AID

Matt followed Lefty to the window. There was no further need for secrecy, and there was dire need to know best how to make good an escape. There was no light in the enclosure, nor any stir at all even in the pens. Matt had a picture of terrified foxes hiding in kennels and corners in the darkness, or clinging desperately to some sagging mesh of wire; of dead fox puppies in a limp and furry heap. Lefty's barking ceased from sheer lack of breath, and before it broke out again Matt with straining ears heard the crackle of underbrush in the distance and knew that the marauders were in flight. The shot had frightened them away. He listened eagerly for the approach of some help from the farm, but though he waited for what seemed hours none came. He began to be oppressed with a sick fear that the thieves would return. He knew he could not sit still and see the little foxes done to death, but he had a panicky

feeling that his own case and Lefty's were little better. He would never dare to touch the gun again though. He must find some other way of saving them all. On the other hand he could not force himself, even in the hope of bringing aid, to face the black darkness of the woods into which the robbers had disappeared.

So he waited with Lefty crouched beside him until the gray dawn broke above the sombre tree-tops. He began to see the dim outlines of the pens, the kennels and feeding troughs, the fence posts and the gray mist of wires. A few black shapes were moving furtively, and there was a huddled heap of darkness in the distant corner of the farthest pen. Matt could not force himself to look at it. Nothing was stirring there, but a new fear clutched at his heart. Were there grown foxes or other young ones in the pen? And, if there were, when they got over their fright and came out again what was to hinder their walking out through the openings which the robbers had cut? These were Mr. McHarg's foxes, and he considered himself Mr. McHarg's boy. He thought the matter over anxiously.

"Lefty," he said at last soberly, "I've got to go over to that next farm and bring someone. An' I'm goin' to have to leave you here. You just lie still—you'll be all right, old Yellow Fellow. But if anybody comes, you *bark!* Bark hard, Lefty! They won't come back if you're here. They'll be afraid of the gun. Now watch!"

Still looking back over his shoulder he moved toward the doorway. Lefty whined and Matt turned back and knelt beside him.

"Don't be afraid, Lefty," he begged. "I'm going, but I'll come back. I *can't* take you with me. You must watch."

From the edge of the platform he looked back wistfully.

"I wish you were coming," he said.

Lefty wagged an imploring tail but Matt turned resolutely and reached warily out for the birch branches. He let himself drop quietly to the ground. Once down he broke into a run, but he was weak with excitement and with hunger, and this soon changed to a weary though hurried walk. He set off in the direction of the farm-

house which he had noticed the day before, conjecturing that here he could most quickly obtain assistance.

Once out of the woods, the way was longer than he had thought. The dew lay thick on the uncut clover through which he moved, wetting his shoes and stockings. Once, afraid to cross a field where cattle were grazing, he made a long detour. There was a hint of chill in the morning air and Matt shivered as he walked. He was trembling with fear and nervous exhaustion when he finally crossed the deserted barnyard and rapped at the back door. He waited some minutes before it was opened by a barefooted man in shirt and trousers with braces hanging, and with a stupid sleepy face. Matt recognized the man called Archie whom he had seen in the stable the morning before.

For a moment the man saw no resemblance between the white-face, big-eyed boy, wet and weary, and the eager youngster whom he had taught to milk in the barn.

"Hello," he said, "what you want?" And

then,—“It’s you, is it? What’re you doin’ around here still? Weren’t you sent off home? You better—”

A sound of furious barking broke out from the McHarg woods across the fields; then a gun shot; and then absolute and prodigious silence. Matt turned to run toward the sound but Archie’s strong arm reached out and held him.

“Here you,” he said, “what’s that mean?”

“Lefty—they’ve shot him,” Matt cried, struggling in the other’s grasp, “They’ve come back.”

“They! Who?”

He was dragged inside the kitchen. Archie’s voice was raised in a shout.

“Jim,” he was calling, “Come down here! Quick! There’s trouble at McHarg’s!—No, you don’t, youngster! You stay! No sir, you don’t go till I do! Here!” Still holding Matt’s wrenching shoulder, he reached out the other hand, locked the door and pocketed the key.

“Now then,” he said, “wait till I get my boots on! An’ if you know what’s goin’ on over there tell me.”

Matt told him, half inarticulate with apprehension. Before the tale was complete Archie was ready. He waited until the other man came down.

"Better bring your gun," he called as they heard him on the stairs. "They're after the foxes an' there's liable to be shootin'."

Maxwell did not wait to inquire into the cause of the disturbance. He burst into the kitchen and through it at a run.

"What's this mean?" he cried as he came up against the locked door.

Archie furnished the key and with merely a grunt of surprise Maxwell opened it and ran for the fox pens. Matt was at his heels, terror for Lefty lending him wings, and Archie followed them, running more heavily. They pelted through the wet clover and the half-grown oats, and, making no detour for the pasture, dashed into the narrow path of the woods. Matt had fallen behind from sheer inability to keep the pace.

When he came into the clearing the men were standing in the pen in which the robbers had been

at work. The foxes in the other enclosures, recovered from their fright, were investigating the feed troughs or running to the wires, where they could watch, with alert ears, these friendlier visitors whose presence promised an early breakfast.

Except for an occasional bark of excitement or admonition from the foxes there was no sound in the clearing. The men turned as Matt came up and one of them called to him roughly, but he did not heed.

The silence from the tower, now that he stood in very sight of it, was so appalling that Matt forgot the suspicion of the men, forgot his weariness, forgot that he was wet and hungry and cold, and crying out, "Lefty! Lefty!" broke into a staggering run. There was no answering bark, no gruff little "wuff," or whine of joy. Lefty was not there: or he was there, dead. With trembling hands Matt lifted the ladder and placed it against the platform in the trees. His knees wobbled as he climbed it, and it seemed as if he could never reach the top.

"Lefty," he called, his voice choking in his throat.

The door was swinging open: the little tower room was empty.

Matt flung himself down the ladder.



## CHAPTER XII

### PRISONER

With some vague hope of following Lefty, Matt started blindly for the highway following the direction in which the marauders had made off the night before. He was too numbed and dazed to think, but intuitively he linked Lefty's disappearance with the fox robbers. He heard the men by the pens shouting to him, but he did not heed. Even when he knew that one of them was running after him, he still kept on at the weary jog-trot which was all he seemed able to accomplish. He did not stop until Archie's hand on his shoulder brought him to a sudden halt.

"Here you," the man said, "what are you runnin' away for?"

"Lefty," said Matt, "I must find Lefty. He's my dog."

Archie swung him about in the narrow path of the woods.

"You mustn't do anything," he said, "but walk straight back here an' stay here until the police come. They can decide what to do with you."

"Oh, please!" said Matt miserably, "let me find Lefty first."

But Archie was obdurate. With both strong hands on the boy's shoulders he marched him back to Maxwell at the pens.

"Runnin' away, were ye?" said Maxwell.

"No, sir," Matt said, "I wasn't running away. I was hunting Lefty. I'm afraid they've killed him. He wouldn't go—I know he wouldn't—when I told him to watch."

"Very likely," Maxwell agreed. "An' what's more you can't go huntin' him. You'll stay right here till the constable comes, an' tell what you know about last night. I reckon it's a sight too much for your own good. Didn't I warn you off the place yestiday mornin'? I thought 'twas queer enough, your sneakin' in when Mr. McHarg was away—but I never guessed you were trying to rob the fox ranch!"

"Oh, come, Maxwell," said Archie, "he raised the alarm; ran across the fields to tell us."

"An' he might at that," Maxwell answered darkly. "You never can tell what he'd be doin'. Didn't he do his best to sneak off right now?"

"I'll tell you what," he added turning to Matt. "I'm goin' to lock you into the granary until the police come. They can take the responsibility of lettin' you go if they want to, but I ain't goin' to."

"Archie, you take him up and lock him into the granary until McDowell gets here. I'll stay and wire up the fence and look things over. Don't let 'im get away from you, now. Look sharp. He's a pretty slippery customer."

Matt looked anything but a "slippery customer"—unless he might indeed have slipped through his captors' hands and fallen to the ground in a dead faint. The terror and excitement of the night, and his grief and anxiety over Lefty had begun to tell on him. Under Archie's propulsion he walked as in a daze through the woods and up the long lane to the McHarg barn.

"Have you had your breakfast?" the man asked as they crossed the barnyard, and Matt answered listlessly, "I don't want any."

The granary proved to be a clean cool room with bins on either hand, now almost empty, and sunlight, the pale gold sunlight of early morning, pouring over a wheat-strewn floor.

Archie ushered him in and shut the door.

A moment later he opened it again, appearing in the entrance with a forkful of hay.

"Here," he said, not unkindly, "you can lie down on this an' have a sleep."

"Thanks," said Matt apathetically. He did not care much about, for the matter of that scarcely realized, his own predicament. He was too much worried over Lefty.

Archie stood looking at him.

"Don't you worry," he said, "you'll be all right. Aw, now, what could we do different? We've got to keep you—our only witness."

He shut the door and opened it again to add,

"Your dog's likely all right. He's just run off."

But Matt knew that Lefty would never have gone away from him of his own accord, and once the door was shut he threw himself on the hay crying "He's dead! He's dead!"

Though this thought was bad, a worse succeeded it. Perhaps Lefty was only wounded and had crawled away into the bushes. Perhaps he was wondering why Matt had forsaken him. Perhaps, most terrible thought of all, he would die there all alone for want of care.

How long he lay picturing these things he did not know. He had ceased crying from sheer weariness and was lying in that half sleep, half stupor, which utter exhaustion brings, when he was roused by a fumbling at the door. Then a more practised hand opened it, and Archie's voice said, "In you go!"

Matt opened his eyes to see a girl with a basket. She was perhaps about his own age, but she was taller than he, with bobbed brown hair, cheeks rosy under their tan, and the bluest eyes, Matt thought he had ever seen.

She paused shyly just inside the door and Matt struggled to a sitting posture in the hay.

"Archie told me I was to bring you over some breakfast," she said. She put the basket down beside him. "Mother packed it," she added. "It's good. You must be hungry."

"I don't want any," Matt said. "Thanks."

But the girl was extracting sandwiches, a bottle of milk, a banana.

"You'll feel better if you eat," she said wisely. "Archie says you'll be out of this just as soon as the constable gets here,—and you want to be able to hunt your dog. You'll be sick if you don't eat some breakfast."

Matt reached out an apathetic hand. The sandwich was good. He was suddenly, appallingly, devastatingly, hungry.

The blue-eyed girl sat down on the hay beside him, nibbling a sandwich as she talked.

"You don't know yet who I am," she said. "I'm Bess Maxwell. I live at the house you came to this morning, but I wasn't up then. I'm sorry about your dog. What do you call him?"

Matt could scarcely speak the beloved name.

"What a nice name," Bess said. "I'm going to hunt for him all over the woods just as soon as I get my work done. I'll take our Rover, and if I find him I'll come right over here and tell you."

"All right," said Matt. "Thanks."

He felt better for the food, and for Bess Maxwell's friendly visit. When Archie called at the door, "Hurry up, Bess," he was sorry to see her go, and said good-bye and "thanks for the breakfast" in friendly fashion.

When she had gone and he heard Archie drop the bar on the big door of the granary, he fell again to thinking of Lefty. He had little faith in Bess's offered search, but he was convinced that if Lefty were anywhere in the woods, or anywhere on earth, he, Matt, could not miss him. Yet here he sat, while Old Yellow Fellow lay wounded, dying perhaps, or in the hands of ruffians, beaten and abused.

In desperation he began to move about the granary searching for a way of escape.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ESCAPE

The walls of the granary were ceiled with pine, tongued and grooved, and its floor was of the same material. It had narrow high windows through which the morning sun sent long slanting paths of light. On either side were deep bins, some quite empty and open to the room, the others boarded to the varying heights of the grain. Matt did not know the grains, except the oats. He had often seen horses, fed on the city streets, tossing the last oats out of their nose-bags in an effort to obtain what grain lay too deep for their reach. Near the oat bins was a trap-door in the floor, but on opening it Matt found that it led into a chute. This had been used to send down grain, but Matt could not discover where it ended, save that it dropped straight down some six or eight feet, and that below it there seemed to be a foot or two of open space and then a pile of oats. It was a narrow, square, box-like opening and Matt



wondered whether he was slim enough to wriggle through it to the liberty which lay below.

He pictured himself as stuck midway and being so found by Maxwell and the police. Nothing but his fear for Lefty would have given him the courage to make the attempt, and, when he finally decided on it, his heart was beating so furiously that he could barely put the plan into execution. He took off his coat as a preliminary and dropped it through the chute. It seemed to him a good omen that it went through with so much ease. Then he lowered himself feet first, kicking and squirming downward. He had placed the width of his shoulders diagonally across the square opening with the idea of having more room, and now he raised his arms, holding them as close as possible above his head.

Thighs and arms suffered in the descent, in spite of the fact that the chute was made of planed boards and worn smooth by the constant passing of grain. Once, halfway down, he believed he was stuck, and the terror of the trapped descended upon him suddenly, so that, regardless of torn

clothing, regardless of bruise and skinning, he fought his way inch by inch to the end of the chute. His feet touched the yielding grain; a few minutes more of desperate wriggling and he was free, half buried in the oats of the huge feed bin in the stables below the granary. After a breathless moment he struggled to his feet, and pulling on his coat to cover shirt sleeves in ribbons and bleeding arms, he made careful way through the empty stables toward the sunshine of the open doorway.

It was well for him that he moved cautiously, for even as he reached it he heard the swift approach of an automobile, and he had barely taken cover behind some bags of chop when he heard steps pass the stable door and go into the drive barn above. He heard the granary door open, and heard steps above his head. He stood listening while they moved from bin to bin. Then the man ran back past the door, and Matt, craning his neck over the bags behind which he was hidden, had a glimpse of the car with two men standing beside it talking to a third.

These, he decided, were the constables, though he was surprised that they wore no uniform. He crouched back again, determined to run no risk of being made prisoner while Lefty remained undiscovered.

"He ain't there," he heard a man say at the car, and knew that this was Archie. "There's no way he could get out, the door was fastened, an' he ain't hidin' in the grain. Most of the bins are empty and I made sure o' the others. No, sir, the young varmint's given us the slip."

"I told ye so," Maxwell's voice answered.

A familiar voice spoke from the car, and Matt knew that his troubles were over.

"Did you look in the chute?" it asked in some concern. Matt knew it to be the voice of Clayton McHarg.

"No youngster," Archie said, "could get through that chute. Tain't big enough for a two-year-old."

McHarg was out of the car.

"We'd better look," he said. "You go up to the drive-barn, Archie. McDowell and I will

search the stables. We mustn't let the boy get away from us."

But Matt had no intention of getting away. This was the man for whom he had been waiting, the man who had once befriended Lefty, the man whose foxes he had saved at what tragic price Matt could not even guess; above all the man who would befriend and help him now in this extremity.

So it came about that he met the men at the stable door.

"Oh, Mr. McHarg," he cried, "why didn't you come? I—Lefty—"

Then he did what most self-respecting boys leave for the girls of their acquaintance, and crumpled down at McHarg's feet in a dead faint. Life had proved too overwhelming for Matt Carewe.

When he wakened again he found himself in bed in a sunny upstairs bedroom where the wind swept the curtains back from vine-shaded windows and the scent of peonies and of late lilacs lingered sweetly. He was undressed and was

wearing a pajama suit so big for him that the cuffs were pinned to the shoulders. It took him a long time to remember where he was. In fact memory helped him very little at first since this was a room he had never seen before.

There was, however, someone in the room with him whom he had seen before, a sweet-faced old lady in a dress of lavender with soft lace at her cuffs and throat. She was sitting rocking and sewing by the window and after a moment of puzzled remembering Matt knew she was the old lady who had given such a good dinner to him and to Lefty yesterday.

"Am I at your house?" he asked.

"No, dear," she said, "you're right here in Mr. McHarg's own room."

Matt hated petting, yet he liked the "dear" from this nice old lady.

"Is Mr. McHarg here?" he asked.

"No. He's gone to see about his foxes. He said to tell you he'd do everything he could to find your big dog. He wants you to stay in bed until he comes home. I'll get you some dinner

now. It's nearly four o'clock. Then you can go to sleep again."

"Do you live here when Mr. McHarg's at home?" Matt asked. The old lady laughed.

"Indeed I don't," she said, "I live with my son. He's the minister. You know where I live, don't you?"

"Oh yes," said Matt, "only—" he stopped.

"Only you wondered how I came to be here. Well, Clayton McHarg is a great friend of ours, my son's, and mine, too. And when you keeled over this morning, after he'd put you to bed himself he telephoned and asked me to come over and stay with you because he'd have to be away looking after things, poor chap."

Matt roused himself to ask about the foxes, "Were many killed?"

"Only two," Mrs. Gray told him. They didn't think the robbers intended to kill them. Pelts weren't good this time of year. Mr. McHarg thought they meant to carry off the young foxes and sell them. But he, Matt, was not to talk. He was to eat and rest and not to worry

about Lefty. Mr. McHarg thought maybe—"oh! only *maybe*," Mrs. Gray reiterated at sight of Matt's face—he would bring the dog home with him.

So Matt ate his dinner and slept away the rest of the afternoon, and wakened to twilight shadows in the room and Mr. McHarg standing by the bed.

"Did you get him?" Matt cried, sitting up.

"No son, I didn't," McHarg answered wearily.

"Did they get away with any of the foxes?" Matt asked.

"Not one. But two are dead."

"Yes," said Matt, "Mrs. Gray told me."

He shuddered.

"I thought he was killing them," he said.

"Did you see the men, Matt?"

"Yes, sir. But it was dark."

"Can you tell me about them—everything? How you came, and why, and when. Are you too tired?"

"Oh, no," said Matt. "I want to tell you. If I—if you—"

McHarg sat down on the bed.

"Now," he said, "take it easy, old fellow, and tell me all—everything about it."

In the half dark Matt poured out his story and McHarg listened with an arm around the boy's shoulders.

"Don't worry, old chap," he said, "I think we'll find your dog. I'll telephone your people and tell them you are here safe with me."

"Oh! please don't do that," Matt pleaded. "They won't let me have Lefty. An' I can't do without him. He's—we've—Oh! I haven't got him now! What shall I do!"

McHarg did his best to comfort the sobbing boy.

"I'm almost sure we'll find him, Matt," he said, "and I must let your people know where you are. But I want you to stay with me for a little while anyway. You and Lefty both. I want you to help with the foxes.

"Now aren't you going to get dressed and eat supper with me? Mrs. Gray has a good supper



ready in the kitchen. I've just got home from Toronto where we hoped we might find your dog."

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE OPEN WINDOW

Matt came downstairs and out to the big farm kitchen a few minutes later. He had found his shirt and his torn trousers neatly mended on the chair by his bed. He remembered then what Mrs. Gray had held in her hands when she sat sewing by the window, so he went first to her.

"Thank you for mending my shirt and trousers," he said shyly, "you were very good."

"You're very welcome, Matt," she answered. "They certainly needed mending. I'm afraid it will take longer to mend your arms!"

Matt laughed.

"They don't feel so bad," he said.

The kitchen looked home-like with its nickle-trimmed range and glass cupboards shining in the light of the big coal-oil lamp on the table. There was a hot supper, bacon and johnny cake and maple syrup, and a pie, and cheese. Matt knew

with surprise that he was hungry again. He slipped into the place which Mrs. Gray designated.

"You say grace, Clayton, like a good boy," Mrs. Gray said when they were seated, and Mr. McHarg bowed his head. Matt scarcely heard what he said, he was so busy thinking how funny it was for Mrs. Gray to call Mr. McHarg a "good boy".

He was still thinking of it when she spoke across the table to McHarg.

"Where did you hide your mother's silver while you were away, Clayton?" she asked. "I couldn't find it."

McHarg looked at her incredulously.

"I didn't hide it," he said, "It's in the bottom of the sideboard."

Mrs. Gray looked worried.

"No, it isn't, Claytie," she said, "nor yet in the cupboards,—nor on the cellar shelves."

McHarg walked across to an old-fashioned side-board set in an alcove in the kitchen wall.

He opened the door, and turned with an exclamation of surprise.

"They were there," he said, "the morning I left for the city."

"Are you sure, Clayton?"

"Positive. I emptied the sugar bowl."

"Clayton," said Mrs. Gray, "did you raise that back window?"

"No," said McHarg, "what window?"

"That one that opens out against the lilacs."

With one accord they had turned, all three, to the window of which Mrs. Gray spoke—a window opening on the little-used orchard side of the house, against a close-grouped clump of lilacs. Its lower sash was raised to its full height.

McHarg got up and walked across to it.

"Look here, Mrs. Gray," he said.

Matt ran across to the window, too. It was composed of two sashes of small panes, and one of the upper of these had been cut from its place.

"They've been in the house, too," said McHarg.

"They've got the silver—Oh! Claytie!—and your mother's spoons! And what else?"

"I daresay everything they could find that was worth taking. Not much money. I never keep a great deal."

Supper was forgotten now in a thorough search of the big house. Matt trotted at Clayton McHarg's heels, silent, filled with excitement.

The robbers had made a clean sweep of whatever valuables they had found easily portable. All the silver was gone, and some pieces of old china which McHarg considered of value; a few of the smaller pictures had been taken from the walls; McHarg's racoon coat was gone and his dresser robbed of cuff links and shirt studs. The safe in the corner of the office had been forced, but the robbers had found little more than a hundred dollars in money. They had, however, carried off a package of jewelry which had belonged to Clayton McHarg's mother and had been placed there for safe keeping.

"Not so bad as it might be," he said. "I do grudge them that silver of great-grandmother

Holmes' though,—yes, and my coat. But since they didn't get the foxes I can't complain! That was thanks to you, Matt. They seem a pretty daring gang. It's well for me that you and Lefty were in the tower. If they'd got all the foxes, and evidently they came prepared to carry off the lot, I'd have been ruined. Did you know, Matt, that a big truck was backed in against the fence by the side road? McDowell found where it had waited. They'd layed down rails and backed into the edge of the woods."

"That's not the way the men came," said Matt. "They came in an automobile, I'm sure, and they came from the highway."

"Probably some one was to meet them with a truck. They wouldn't risk keeping it there very long for fear of discovery. It's likely the man with the truck didn't come for some time after the others left. He hadn't heard your gun and he waited until long past the appointed time for the others to come with the foxes. When dawn began to show and they hadn't come he made his way to the pens. I imagine he had been charged against

doing this, or he would have gone sooner. He found nobody there, but Lefty barked at him, and it was he who fired the shot you heard at the farm. Both Archie and Maxwell think they heard a truck going up the side-road as they ran, but Collins' milk truck goes by early, and they didn't give it a thought. We couldn't get any trace of the truck, though. Nor of the robbers. We haven't much to go on."

"Do you think he shot Lefty, Mr. McHarg?" asked Matt.

"I think maybe he shot at him," said McHarg. "He certainly didn't kill him outright or we'd have found him before this. Bessie Maxwell has combed the woods all day. There isn't a thicket she and Rover haven't investigated."

"Do you think he took Lefty away with him?" Matt persisted.

"He might have done that," said McHarg. "Lefty would sell for quite a bit of money. Or Lefty may have followed him."

"But I don't know how he'd get down," said Matt. "I had an awful time getting him up. It

took *hours*. I know he'd never jump a height like that."

"No," said McHarg, "I don't think he would. Maybe he'll tell us when we find him."

Matt laughed. Hopefulness such as this was contagious.

"Come," said Mrs. Gray, "you must eat some supper. My johnny cake will be getting cold."

Before tea was over the Reverend James Gray drove up in his little runabout to take his mother home, and he, in turn, heard the story of the robbers, and of the lost dog. Matt sat listening, eager-eyed, enjoying his share in the story now that it was all over and he was safe with Mr. McHarg.

When their guests had gone McHarg and Matt together made a round of the stables, where Archie and Maxwell had done the evening chores. As they came back to the house McHarg said, "I've paid Archie to watch in the tower to-night. Tomorrow I'll try and get one of the Collins' boys to help me until my new man comes. We can't leave the foxes alone at night until those men are



caught and punished. My pens were so safe there in the heart of that bit of woods that I didn't think anybody would know much about them except my neighbours and friends. Perhaps those chaps found them by accident last night as they went through the woods on their way back to the highway after they robbed the house."

"But, Mr. McHarg," said Matt, "it wasn't last night they were at the house; it was the night before. For when I came here to see you yesterday morning Lefty and I walked all around the house, and *that window was open then.*"

"Oh," said McHarg, "that was the time they found the foxes. They came back last night ready to clear out the lot."

That night, lying wide-awake remembering the incidents of the last three days, Matt had a sudden thought which brought him sitting bolt upright. He got out of bed in the darkness and felt his way across the hall to McHarg's room.

"Mr. McHarg," he said, tapping on the half open door, "please may I come in? I want to tell you something."

"Hello," McHarg answered, "is that you, Matt? Come on in."

Evidently he too had been awake. The reading lamp at the head of the bed sprang out into a soft blur of radiance revealing Matt standing in McHarg's pajamas, his hair on end, his eyes shining.

"Oh, Mr. McHarg," he cried, "I know where your silver is, and your coat, and everything! I'm most sure I do!"

McHarg sat up in bed.

"You do!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Matt, "I think so."

As he went on with his story, sitting on the side of the bed, to which McHarg had reached out a hand and drawn him, it was evident that McHarg thought so, too.

"Matt," he said, after considering the matter gravely, "do you think you could take McDowell and perhaps one or two other men down there to-morrow night and show them the place?"

"I could in the day-time," said Matt.

"I don't know. I think McDowell—he is

the constable, you know—would think day-time was too conspicuous for his purpose. Couldn't you find it at night?"

"Yes," said Matt slowly. "I could find it all right. If you'd come, Mr. McHarg, I'd go and show them."

McHarg looked at him curiously.

"All right," he said, "I'll go along. You had a pretty mean time in that woods, didn't you? Half afraid of it, yet. You had better get in here with me until morning."

With a sigh of content Matt snuggled down in the big wide bed. It was, somehow, easier to sleep here than in a strange and lonely room with Lefty gone.

## CHAPTER XV

### WINWOOD ROAD

Next morning Matt awakened to a smell of coffee and bacon. He could hear someone moving about downstairs and he dressed hurriedly and made his way to the kitchen, from which the hunger-compelling odors seemed to emanate. Mr. McHarg was already at breakfast and at his bidding Matt helped himself from the pan on the stove, and filled his cup from the big coffee-pot.

"Well, young man," McHarg said as they finished breakfast, "what are your plans for the day?"

Matt looked at him shyly.

"I'd like to work for you," he said, "that is if you think I could earn my board. But I think, if you wouldn't mind, I'd like to go back down to the fox pens, because—I just hoped—maybe—Lefty would come back there."

"It's worth going, anyway," McHarg said,

"though I'm afraid he won't be there. See what I did yesterday," he added, "I think this ought to make sure he'll be brought back if he's alive."

He had been opening a roll of posters, now, he handed one to Matt. It contained a description of Lefty, and offered the astonishing reward of one hundred dollars.

"Oh, Mr. McHarg!" Matt cried, his face alight, "how good you are! I'll—oh, I'll do anything you ever want me to as long as I live! What a lot of money! I don't think, when you lost the silver and things and the two dead foxes, you can afford to pay that much for Lefty. But I'll pay you back—every cent. What are you going to do with the bills, Mr. McHarg?"

"These are just a few that were left," McHarg said. "I got a couple of men to take a car and put them up along the highway and pretty well through the district. I've advertised for him in the dailies, too. I'm in hope that the reward will bring him back. I owe you more than that, Matt, for saving my foxes."

"Oh, I'm sure it will bring him," said Matt

eagerly, "if"—he added more soberly, "if only he's alive."

"Well," said McHarg, "we'll hope he's all right. If he wasn't killed by that shot you heard I don't see why anybody would kill him. I believe he's all right, somewhere, Matt. And I have great hope of our finding him. Is there anything else you can think of that we might do?"

"No," said Matt. "It seems hard to know what else we could do."

"Of course," McHarg added, "if we find the men they will be able to tell us. And I think we may get them to-night if your guess is right about the cache in the woods. Do you think, Matt, that Lefty might perhaps go back home—to your uncle's?"

"I don't believe he would," said Matt, "but if you wouldn't mind my telephoning I could find out."

"How?" said McHarg. "Would you telephone the house?"

"No," said Matt quickly. "I couldn't bear to talk to Aunt Jo. She hated Lefty. I never want

to speak to her again. But I could get Artie Renan to find out for me."

"Your Aunt Jo has been pretty good to you though, Matt," McHarg said gravely. "We mustn't forget that. I think perhaps you and I will go down there together in the car this morning. I'll have to go to the city about this robbery business. We can see your Aunt and get your clothes, and I can arrange with them about your staying with me for the holidays anyway. I think that would be a better way to do things. What you have done looks a little like running away without even saying thanks for what they've done for you."

"Well," said Matt, "if you think I should, of course I will. But let's not tell them anything about Lefty. I couldn't talk about him to them. I just couldn't, Mr. McHarg."

"Then we won't say a word about him," said McHarg.

So it came about that that morning Matt went back to the house on Winwood Road.

"You go in first, Mr. McHarg," he pleaded

as the car stopped in front of the familiar door.

McHarg laughed.

"All right," he said, "I'll call you."

But it was Aunt Jo who called him, nearly half an hour later. She came to the door in a fresh gingham dress, looking as she always did, clean and trim and appallingly capable.

"Come on in, Mattie," she said.

"We got your card yesterday," she added as Matt came up the steps and followed her shyly into the "front room," where Mr. McHarg was sitting very much at his ease. "I'm glad you have such a good place for the holidays."

"It ought to do him good," she added, turning to McHarg, "and he should be able to earn his keep and a little more, if he'll only set himself to work. But the best of boys needs watching, and Matt can't claim to be the best—nor the worst either," she added justly.

Matt was ashamed of what she had said about wages, but Mr. McHarg laughed and said that he would see to it that Matt got whatever he earned,



and he guessed Matt himself would see that he earned whatever he got.

The boy gave him a shy look of gratitude for that, but Aunt Jo was already being capable in another direction.

"You go upstairs, Mattie," she was saying, "an' pack your clothes in that little leather trunk that stands in the hall. I guess you could take it in the car. It's your trunk. Your father left it for you when you first came. You may as well put all your things into it while you're at it, an' while your room's empty I'll just ask sister Emma to make me a visit."

All Matt's things were not many and he made quick work of packing. He felt no pang of regret at leaving the bare little room where he had slept for so many years, but his one eager glance through the window to the empty backyard brought a lump to his throat, and hurried him back downstairs to the comradeship of Clayton McHarg.

He had thought he could not bear to speak to

Aunt Jo about his lost dog, but at the last minute he ran back from the car to ask pleadingly:

"Didn't Lefty ever come back, Aunt Jo?"

"No," said Mrs. Brown, "he never did. Not that I saw."

"Could he—do you think he could have come—an' you not see him?"

"No, I don't, I'm perfectly sure he couldn't. Run along, now, Mattie, and be a good boy."

Matt turned back to the car without a word. They were almost back to the Don bridge before he spoke. Then he said hopefully.

"A hundred dollars is a lot of money. Maybe somebody'll bring him back if he isn't dead."

"We'll wait until to-night's over before we worry," said McHarg.

There was another long silence, then Matt broached another subject which he had been turning over in his mind ever since he had said good-bye to Mrs. Brown.

"Mr. McHarg," he began, "I—somehow it never seemed easy to find any way to help Aunt Jo. I thought you might think—I guess I really

wasn't much good. She didn't seem to mind my coming away. But if you'll let me stay with you—"

"I don't believe I'm quite as useful myself as Mrs. Brown is," McHarg said, "I imagine you'll find it a great deal easier to find ways of helping me. You've managed very well already."

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE CACHE

All that afternoon they spent in the city. They had dinner together in one of the down-town restaurants, and put in time at a picture show until dark. Then they got into McHarg's car and drove slowly north on Yonge Street. They were well past Locksley when a big car purred past them and, slowing down, proceeded at a moderate pace keeping some few hundred yards ahead.

"Gee! that's a dandy," Matt said, and after a moment, "are they stopping?"

"No," said McHarg, "I don't think so. That's McDowell's car, the county constable."

McHarg had slowed his own car, but the big car in front, having come almost to a standstill, picked up speed and continued its course. A moment later when McHarg's car also had slowed almost to a stop he leaned back and opened the door noiselessly, and a man stepped to the run-

ning board and entered the car, closing the door behind him with as little noise as McHarg had made in opening it. Neither of the men spoke until the car had reached the brow of the hill at the foot of which the exchange had been made. Then McHarg said:

"Well, I think we accomplished that all right, McDowell," and McDowell answered:

"Yes, I don't think any one was wise to that, and if they are watching my car they'll know it has gone on north."

"Here's your assistant detective," McHarg said. "Matt, this is the county constable, Mr. McDowell. This youngster, McDowell, is Matt Carewe."

"Picked up a bit since yesterday, eh?" McDowell said. "He doesn't look much like sliding down a grain chute to-day. Feeling a bit better, eh?"

"Yes, sir," Matt said, "but I haven't found Lefty."

"Well, I hope we'll remedy that," McDowell said. "Don't you think you'd better climb over

into the back seat and tell me about those friends of yours back there in the woods?"

Matt did as he was asked. He had gotten over the feeling of terror which the experience of the night in the woods had left. It had, perhaps, been dwarfed by the events of the next night and by his grief over Lefty's disappearance. But its memory was still very vivid, and his story evidently impressed the listening constable. While he told it, the car had turned back on the highway, followed it for a little distance and, turning east on a little-used road, entered a gateway. McDowell leading, the three got out, crossed a sort of back lane, plunged down a bank into a deep ravine, and after following it for a few yards, found themselves upon the road down which Matt and Lefty had turned from the highway.

When they neared this road, McDowell paused in the thin growth of saplings.

"One of us had better go ahead and make sure that the road is clear," he said. McHarg moved forward carefully, climbed the fence, and after a moment whistled softly.

"All clear," McDowell said in a low tone, and he and Matt followed McHarg less carefully.

A few minutes later they were climbing the bank which led up to the little hollow where Matt and Lefty had spent their first night out of doors.

"Are you sure this is the place?" McDowell asked as they began the climb.

"Yes, sir," said Matt. "I know it is. If you'll lift your flashlight I'll show you the log I rolled against. There it is. We were hidden close under the spruce. Up there over the top of the slope is the little hollow where we first slept. And it was somewhere near it that the men were working."

They climbed upward, Matt keeping close to McHarg in the dark and glancing about fearfully now and then.

"Don't worry, kid," McDowell said when he observed the boy's apprehensive glances. "we had to be careful not to be trailed, but there's nobody in this bit of woods—my men have been watching it since I got McHarg's message this morning. Now if we can only find the cache we may be able

to discover some of that lost property, and later to catch red-handed the fellows who made it."

Matt gave him a little smile. "I'm not afraid," he said, "with you and Mr. McHarg. But," he added truthfully, "I was awfully scared on Monday night, and so was Lefty."

A moment later he paused beside a leaf-filled hollow. "I'd think it was right here we slept," he said, "but this hollow is all filled up with leaves, and I'm sure we would have pressed 'em down."

"That's no proof," McDowell growled, "let's see beneath these leaves."

He stirred them with his foot and then dropped to his knees and began to remove them carefully. The little hollow was filled with leaves and loose earth, and under these a pile of boughs and dry brush. McDowell lifted the branches carefully at one end and McHarg and Matt leaned over the little hollow, McHarg holding McDowell's flashlight.

Matt watched sombrely.

"Do you think you'll find—Lefty?" he asked.



McDowell laughed shortly and it was McHarg who answered.

"No," he said, "but maybe we'll find the silver and the other things."

As he spoke McDowell, who had been crouching above the hollow with one arm reaching down into its depths gave a grunt of satisfaction, and slowly straightening, drew from the depths of the excavation something which from its torn and dirty wrapping glittered in the half light, and which, when McHarg turned his flashlight upon it and McDowell had torn away the soiled paper, proved to be a silver salver of considerable size.

"Yours?" said McDowell.

"Yes, that's mine all right," McHarg answered grimly. He reached a hand for it, but McDowell hesitated.

"I don't know," he said, "no, I think you had better leave it. You'll probably get the whole lot back before long," he said, "but I don't know as I'd just like to hand it to you like this."

"Need a little more red tape to it, eh?" McHarg said, "but what if those rascals come and move them somewhere else to-night?"

"No danger," McDowell answered, "they'll be in jail before morning. We'll catch 'em red-handed *with the stuff*. They won't leave it here long, and my men are watching the woods now. Only I'd like to fix up the place like it was before. I don't want them to suspect anything until they get that stuff back in their possession."

With the aid of the flashlight, which had now been transferred to Matt, the two men replaced the brush and earth and leaves they had removed, and McDowell, finding another hollow, scooped up fresh leaves to spread over the top of the cache, and to cover any traces of their presence.

Then they proceeded very carefully down the bank and, crossing the road as before, made their way through the ravine to the car. Here McDowell left them.

"I guess I'll go and get the bracelets ready," he said jocularly. "I'll telephone you."

"All right," said McHarg. He and Matt climbed into the waiting car and turned its nose homeward.

"Tired?" said McHarg. "Sleepy?"

"No!" Matt answered. He felt as if he might never want to sleep again. But when the car stopped in front of the old stone house McHarg had to shake him awake.

"Here, man," he said, "wake up and help me carry in this trunk of yours."

Matt was out of the car in a minute, but McHarg shouldered the little leather trunk and carried it in as lightly as a bag of bran.

"We'll take it upstairs when we go," he said depositing it in the wide hall. "Meanwhile we'll have a glass of—no, I guess a cup of cocoa. You dig out some of Mrs. Maxwell's cookies from the big blue cookie jar in the pantry while I get some milk from the cellar."

Over their cocoa Matt speculated eagerly as to whether or not the men would return to their cache and the manner of their arrest.

"I'm going to lie awake and listen for the telephone," he said, as McHarg, after depositing the trunk in the big east room which Matt already was beginning to call his own, bade him good-night.

But he did not hear the jangle of the telephone bell, nor McHarg's voice answering it from the hall below. His first intimation that any news had arrived was when McHarg spoke to him as he passed his door on his way downstairs to get breakfast.

"Hello, Matt," he said, "they got your men."

Matt was out of bed in a twinkling. He was at the head of the stairs long before McHarg reached the foot.

"Did they get Lefty?" he cried.

McHarg shook his head.

"Not a clue," he said, "but I think surely we'll get him. There aren't many thieves who wouldn't rather have a hundred dollars than a dog."

## CHAPTER XVII

### CLUES

Though Matt was never forgetful of Lefty, the next few weeks went by as if on wings. McHarg had decided on moving his fox pens closer to the house, but meanwhile it was necessary for somebody to keep watch and two of the Collins' boys came over and slept in the tower.

"There's not much danger of thieves this time of the year," McHarg said. "Nobody would take them now for their pelts. The rascals who did come probably intended to take them alive, and sell them to some unscrupulous breeder who would have paid them for good stock without questioning too closely how they came by it. But someone else might take the same notion, and, as I can't afford to keep a man watching them all the year round, I think we'd better move the pens."

There was plenty of stir around the farm now for harvest had started in earnest. Sandy Mc-

Cort, McHarg's new man, came at the beginning of the second week. He was only a few months out from Scotland and Matt and McHarg had a great time interpreting and memorizing his Lowland Scotch. He was a dour, glum sort of chap, but he worked well and after his coming McHarg had more time to oversee his new pens and to care for the foxes in the woods.

In both of these things Matt was his right-hand man. He soon learned how to make the porridge for the little foxes and just how much meat and biscuit to apportion to the older ones. As soon as the puppies were separated from their mothers he set about trying to tame them, and he was wild with delight when he finally held one without protest in his arms.

McHarg had been called to court to give evidence as to his property, and in spite of his efforts to keep Matt out of it, the boy also was called as a witness.

Matt had been very much worried about this at first, but the experience had not been altogether unpleasant. He had answered the questions put

to him in a manly, straightforward way which won the commendation of the judge on the bench; and the story of his run-away trip to the McHarg farm, which of course came to light as the reason for his sleeping in the woods, and of his courageous defense of the McHarg foxes, made him quite a hero with the newspaper men, who clustered around him after it was over trying to make him talk. But he was far too shy among all these grown men to say much, and he breathed more freely when he and Mr. McHarg had left the City Hall behind them.

The trial had thrown little light on the fate of Matt's dog.

"Please, your honour," he had petitioned, when the prosecuting attorney had finished his examination and told him that he might leave the witness box, "Please, your honour, won't you try to find out about my dog!"

"I certainly will, my boy," the judge had answered. And Matt had gone away vaguely comforted. He would have asked the prisoners in the dock—there were three of them—to tell

him of Lefty's fate, but he was, somehow, afraid of their malice. After the first glance, except when directed by the court, he had not looked at them.

There was little, however, to be discovered, and such information as came to light was extremely unsatisfactory. The robbers' plan, as McHarg had supposed, had been to make off with the live foxes after stunning them sufficiently by a blow on the head to make them easy to handle. According to arrangement a man with a large truck loaded with crates in which the foxes were to be placed, had waited in the edge of the woods by the side-road.

It was proven at the trial that this man, who owned a small fox farm of his own in another county, had agreed to pay well for all the McHarg foxes which were delivered undamaged to his waiting truck. He had been behind his scheduled time in arriving, and, consequently, had not heard the report of the gun in the tower. After waiting for some time he had made his way stealthily through the woods to discover what



was the reason of the delay and had found the pens deserted except for a barking maniac of a yellow collie, who had rushed out on to the platform of the watch-tower.

Afraid that such a din of barking would rouse the people at the farm, he had fired at the dog. At first he believed he had killed him, for he pitched forward over the edge of the platform, fell into the bushes below and rolled to the ground. But then he saw that he was not dead, and, in terror that he might follow him and give the alarm, he had seized one of the sacks left by his frightened accomplices, shoved the dog into it, and half dragged, half carried him to the truck. He had driven directly home making what speed he could.

Half an hour or so after he had left the McHarg farm, having seen no further signs of life from the dog, he had kicked both dog and sack off the truck. He was able to locate the spot exactly and McHarg and Matt drove all around the district making inquiries and announcing the offered reward. But no one knew anything of the lost dog and McHarg

was convinced that the prisoner had not spoken the truth.

Moreover Lefty's story had been given such prominence by the city dailies, that it seemed as if no one could acquire and continue to own such a dog without arousing considerable suspicion. Therefore, though Matt refused to believe that Yellow Fellow was dead, McHarg found himself more and more forced to that conclusion.

To his first offer of reward he now appended a second for anyone giving authentic information as to the dog whether dead or alive. Nothing came of it, however, and Matt talked less and less often of Lefty.

He and Bess Maxwell had come to be firm friends, but Matt never petted or played with Rover. It didn't seem loyal to his own dog, whom he had deserted in trouble, as Lefty, he knew, would never have deserted him. This was the thing over which he grieved continually, though he could not bring himself to talk of it to anyone. He used to lie awake at night picturing a hundred terrible things which might have

happened, and imagining a reproach in Lefty's friendly face which he had never seen in reality. He began to blame himself for going to Maxwell's. They were Mr. McHarg's foxes—but Lefty was a chum, a brother.

And then one night, as he and Bess Maxwell walked home with full pails after a berry-picking excursion, Matt heard Lefty barking. They were trudging along the narrow pathway at the side of the highroad on their way home for tea when they were overtaken by a muddy, ill-kept sedan which passed them at a fair rate of speed. At it passed Matt had called back to Bess something about the amount of berries in her pail, and a dog in the car had broken into vociferous barking.

With a wild cry of "Lefty! That's Lefty!" Matt dropped his pail and started to run after the car.

For a little while Bess ran, too, calling to him to wait, to stop. But she was soon out-distanced. There was no keeping pace with Matt's excitement. She saw the car pass her own gate and then the church corner and the road that led to the

McHarg farm. Far behind, Matt was running after it. It was out of sight, but Matt ran on. He did not hear her calling him, nor think of her as she stumbled on behind him, crying with fear for him, and burdened with the two pails of berries. Cars passed her from both directions; she lost sight of Matt in the traffic; found and lost him again.

"Oh, he'll be killed! He'll be killed!" she cried.

And all the time she was trying to think of some way of helping him. Her first thought was that Mr. McHarg, if he were told, would follow him in the car; then, remembering that the McHarg house would be empty, she thought of her father. But he, too, was working in the fields, and he might not go even when she found him. He had little use for such vagaries as Matt Carewe seemed to be always committing.

So at her own gate she dropped her pails and flew for the parsonage, only a few minutes' walk beyond. Fluff-Enough fled in panic before her racing feet, and Mrs. Gray, hearing her hurried step on the verandah, ran to the door.



With a wild cry of "Lefty! That's Lefty!" Matt dropped his pail and started to run after the car.

"What is wrong, Bess?" she cried, "Your mother——"

"Where's Mr. Gray?" Bess demanded. "Where is he? His car——oh, get it out quick! He must go after Matt! Matt is running straight down Yonge Street after Lefty. Lefty is in a car. Oh, call him! Hurry! He will be killed. He just ran straight down the middle of the road. Oh, please call him quick."

She stopped because Mr. Gray himself had come in and was listening to her story.

"All right, Bess," he said. "Don't worry. I'll get him."

Bess loved him because he went in his shirt sleeves and without his hat.

"Be careful, James," Mrs. Gray called as the little car whirled past the door, and then to Bess, "There, there, dear! Don't cry. Matt will be all right. Jim'll get him. Sit down, and don't cry, and tell me about it."

As the little car sped along the highway Mr. Gray strove, through the procession of moving cars, to get some glimpse of Matt, but without

success. He began to think that the lad had been struck by a car, and either flung aside and left unconscious by the roadway or carried on into the city to the nearest hospital. His fears, therefore, were augmented rather than allayed, when he spied the boy stretched at full length on the grass beyond the open ditch which here bordered the highway. But a second glance assured him that Matt was lying in a perfectly natural position, and as he drew up beside him he saw that he had thrown himself down with his head on his arms and was sobbing as if his heart would break.

It was no easy matter to stop a car in the Saturday traffic which, even at Markton, thronged the Provincial Highway, but Mr. Gray drew off the pavement only a few feet beyond the prostrate boy and walked back.

"Come on home, Matt," he said.

Matt lifted a tear-stained face and then scrambled to his feet.

"Mr. Gray," he cried, "that was Lefty, and I couldn't catch up with him. He barked and barked, but I just couldn't run any faster. And

then he was gone. I couldn't hear—nor even see the car."

"Did you get their license number?" Mr. Gray asked.

Matt shook his head.

"No," he said, "I never thought of looking at it. Oh, why didn't I! I never thought."

"Never mind," said Mr. Gray, "jump into the car and see if we can catch them. Do you know what the car was like—what make? What did it look like?"

"I don't know," said Matt miserably. "I only thought of Lefty."

"Would you know them if we did get them?" Mr. Gray asked.

"No," said Matt. "But," he added hopefully, "I could call Lefty. He would bark."

Mr. Gray looked doubtful.

"Well," he said, "jump in. Maybe we can overtake them."

But though Mr. Gray exceeded the speed limit and they made a faster run into the city than Matt had ever experienced, and though Matt kept up a



continuous call to his dog until he was almost too hoarse to speak, they saw no car which seemed to be the one they chased.

There was nothing left but to put the matter in the hands of the Provincial police, and this Mr. Gray did before they returned.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### SETTLING IN

It was a few days after Matt's unfruitful chase after the lost dog that Mr. McHarg came to him with a letter in his hand.

"I have a letter from your father, Matt," he said. "He says he is coming east this winter—maybe for Christmas. Meanwhile, if you like it better here than in Toronto, you may stay with me—provided, first, that you write him yourself telling him what you really want to do, and, second, that there is a good school somewhere near which you may attend. Of course there is Markton High School when you are ready for it, but you have another year to put in, in Public School, didn't you tell me? You and Bess Maxwell would be in the same class. I guess you could go to the Highland School, or if you liked better you could walk in to Markton—I shouldn't like to have you ride a bicycle on the highway. First thing of course is, do you want to stay?"

"You know I *want* to stay, Mr. McHarg," Matt said slowly. "I'd *love* to stay. I've been just sick to think of going away from the foxes, and the colt—and—and you."

"Well, then——"

"But—if I go to school all day, I won't be able to earn my keep. Didn't my father think about that? He used to pay Aunt Jo."

"Yes, he did, Matt. He said he would pay for you, but I wrote him that you had saved me a good deal of money over foxes, and worked like a nailer all summer; that I had put a couple of hundred dollars to your account in the Markton Bank; and that if you were going to stay with me until you went to college—provided we keep on liking each other—you would more than earn your keep, and I will pay you something each year for your holiday work. How's that for a bargain?"

"It's—it's just awfully good," Matt said. "Am I really to stay? Oh, Mr. McHarg, do you really want me? I'll work—I'll try to make you glad that I——"

He stopped with a sudden choke in his voice, and McHarg slipped an arm around his shoulders.

"I've been glad a thousand times," he said. "I want you to stay. I've been—a bit lonely myself, Matt. Some day perhaps I'll tell you why. It's four years since my mother died. Mrs. Maxwell does for me nicely about the cleaning and cooking and the Gray's are great good friends, but I miss somebody to talk to—it's rather nice to have a little brother. There, old chap, it's settled, isn't it? You'll stay with me and together we'll make this old place into a real home for both of us. I've written your father that I'll hire a regular housekeeper in the fall. I guess Mrs. Maxwell can pick one for us. And, one other thing: I think if we're going to be house-mates you'll have to drop the 'Mr. McHarg' and call me 'Clayton'."

"Uncle Clayton?" Matt questioned.

But McHarg shook his head.

"No," he said, "I'd like to be a different sort of relative to you than Mr. Brown. He was an uncle, wasn't he? No, you'd better just say 'Clayton'. You could do that, couldn't you?"

"Yes, sir," said Matt.

So it came about that as the summer passed Matt began to look on the old stone house as home, and to have a proprietary interest in the foxes, moved now to the new pens, and in the horses and cattle and the noisy pigs.

"I think, Matt," McHarg said one day, "we ought to get another dog." Then, at the sudden grief in Matt's face, "We really ought to have a watch dog about the place on account of the foxes. Would you like another collie, or shall we get an Airedale or a police dog?"

"Please, Clayton," Matt appealed, "let's wait a little while, just another week or two—for Lefty. Maybe he'll come back yet."

"It's no use, Matt," McHarg said. "I'm afraid we'll never see Lefty again. But we'll not get another dog yet. There's no great hurry. I guess the foxes themselves would rouse us if anybody were around, at any rate while we sleep with wide open windows."

"It's great here," Matt said, "it's just like I planned that day when we first came and the house

looked so still and homelike in the sunshine with nobody around. Only Lefty isn't here. I thought——"

His sentences always ended so when he talked about the dog. He could never keep that lump in his throat from choking him so that he couldn't go on.

"I wish he'd come home," he thought. "We'd be so happy."

The week before school opened for the fall term was a busy one for Matt. He went into Markton and bought such new books as he needed, and he and Mr. McHarg went together to the city to invest in a new school suit. There seemed a hundred odd jobs to be done about the fox pens and the stables, and to add to the interest the threshers were at Maxwell's and Matt, who had never seen a threshing, haunted the Maxwell farm-yard. On the Friday before school opened the Grays, who had a couple of visitors, planned a picnic at Lake Simcoe. Since their guests also had a car there was room for a couple more, and Mrs. Gray had elected to take Matt and Bess Maxwell.

They were to make an early start, and Matt was surprised when Mr. McHarg said to him as he went to bed. "Matt, I want you to go out to the highway to-morrow morning. A man is bringing out a parcel for the farm. I don't think you'll have any trouble in getting the stuff home. I want you out there at six-thirty to meet his truck. There will be a letter for the driver. Don't forget to give it to him."

"But, Clayton, you know the Grays were to leave at seven! Do you think I can get back in time? Couldn't Sandy go, this once?"

"No, he couldn't, Matt. I think they will wait for you, but if they don't I'm afraid you will just have to miss it. This is quite important to me, and neither Sandy nor I can go. I'm sure they won't leave you behind if you want to go."

"All right, Clayton," Matt said, remembering with compunction how much McHarg had done for him, "of course I'll go. And if I miss the picnic I shan't mind—very much. I'll set my alarm clock."

"I'll wake you," McHarg said. "I have to give you the letter."

On the chance that he might still be able to connect with the picnic party Matt put on his Sunday suit and hunted out his bathing suit and towels before he left on McHarg's errand. Even so he was off early and sauntered along the side road, where on the grass of the road-side the dew lay in showers of sparkling diamonds, or hung like pearls on cobwebs stretched between the rails of the old snake fences. He was surprised as he reached the top of the little rise which shut off the view of the highway to see that a truck was standing at the corner. It must, he thought, be the one of which Mr. McHarg had spoken and he hurried his pace. A man was standing by the truck, and, as Matt looked, something flashed away from his side, a yellow streak! The air was filled with joyous barks.

"Lefty!" cried Matt. "Lefty!"

He had been running before: now he flew. But the big dog was faster. He hurled himself against Matt in a paroxysm of delight, and Matt



threw his arms around the dear big body, and then both were on the grass, rolling over together, a tangle of boy and dog, licking tongue, caressing hands, waving yellow tail, shrill barks, and broken endearments. From beside the truck Calvin Salter watched them, chuckling.

"Hello, youngster," he shouted, as Matt finally rose to his feet and came toward him. "Glad to get the old fellow back, eh? He seems pretty glad himself."

Matt and Lefty ran up to him. The boy recognized him at once.

"Oh," he said, "it's you. Thank you! Thank you for bringing me my dog! Where did you find him? Did you see about him in the bills?"

"Yes, but I'd have known he was your dog without," the old man said. "There aren't many like him. He was given to me a couple of days ago, crated, to take to a man from out Warren Sound way, who was to get him in Woodington. Soon as I saw him I knew he was your dog. Course I'd read the bills about him, an' the papers about the trial, so I just telephoned your Mr. McHarg."

"Clayton!" cried Matt. "He knew all the time! That's why he's been in the city so much these days! He never let me know!"

"Guess he hoped to give you a good surprise! He came down right away but it took a day or so to straighten things up. Seems an Italian truck-farmer out somewhere near Allandale found him half-dead in a bag. Of course he thought his owner had tried to dispose of him, so he took him home an' cared for him. He had a broken paw and a shot wound in his head that had just grazed his scalp. Well, he took care of him and brought him down to the city to sell him on the market. He never read a hand bill, can't read English anyhow, nor talk it very well. Well, this Warren Sound man happened to be in the city and he bought him for twenty dollars. But he was still pretty lame, his broken paw had never been set you see, so McLean—he's the man that bought him—took him to some sort of dog hospital, an' left orders that when he was all right he was to be shipped to his brother in Woodington.

"That's how he came to me. Mr. McHarg bought him from McLean for what he paid and

his hospital fees and arranged for me to bring him out this morning—and *I did!* Now then, there you are! Whole story! And I've got to get started for Woodington or the ole Missus'll have out a search party."

"Oh, but I've got a letter for you from Clayton—Mr. McHarg. Here it is. And I'd like to thank you ever so much better than I have for bringing old Yellow Fellow back home,—I'd like to give you something. Won't you take my knife?—It's a good one but the little blade is broken. My father sent it to me at Christmas. It is the only thing I have that's really worth anything. Please take it. I'd like you to have it—to—sort of remember Lefty by."

The old man shook his head.

"Mr. McHarg's give me far too much already," he said, "I don't want anything for bringing back your dog."

"Oh, I know you don't," cried Matt. "That's not for bringing him back. That's just—just for love!"

"All right, then," Salter said. He put the

knife into his pocket, and looked wistfully at the boy and dog. "I'll not forget ye," he said. "Maybe you'll take another cruise with me,—both of you."

He climbed back into the cab and started the engine. As the truck moved off he leaned out and waved a hand. When boy and dog were left behind he pulled Matt's knife from his pocket, holding it in his hard weather-beaten old hand.

"Just for love!" he said. "Well! Well!"

He put it back with gentle fingers and with both hands on the wheel pulled the truck into its usual speed.

Matt and Lefty, left alone on the deserted highway, indulged in another wrestle and then dashed home to show themselves to Mr. McHarg, waiting for them at the gate.

"Clayton! Clayton!" Matt cried. "Here's Lefty home! And, oh thank you, for getting him back! And won't you please, phone Mr. Gray and explain why I can't go to the picnic. They wouldn't expect me to, would they," he added anxiously, "with Lefty just come home?"





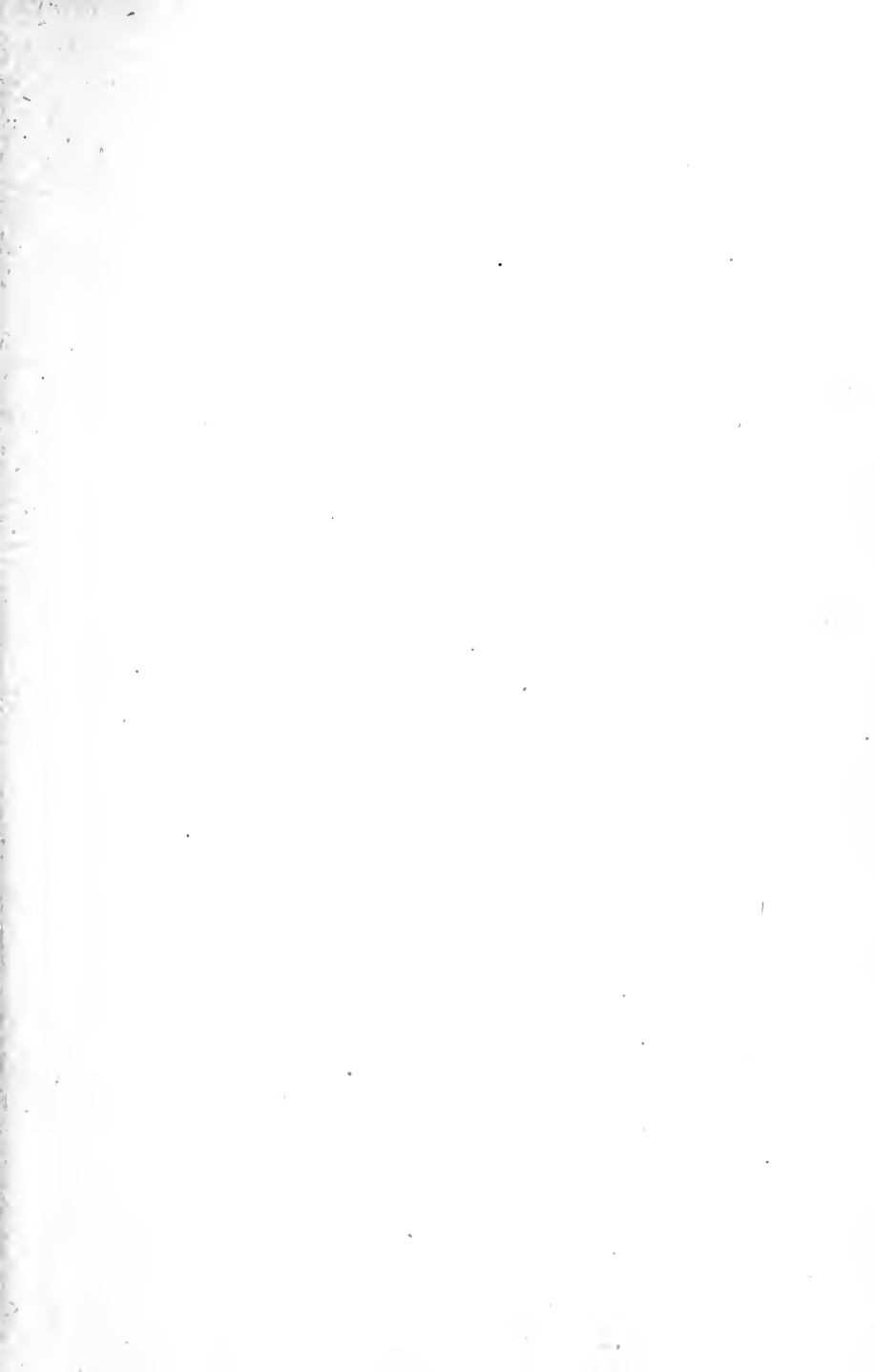


















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